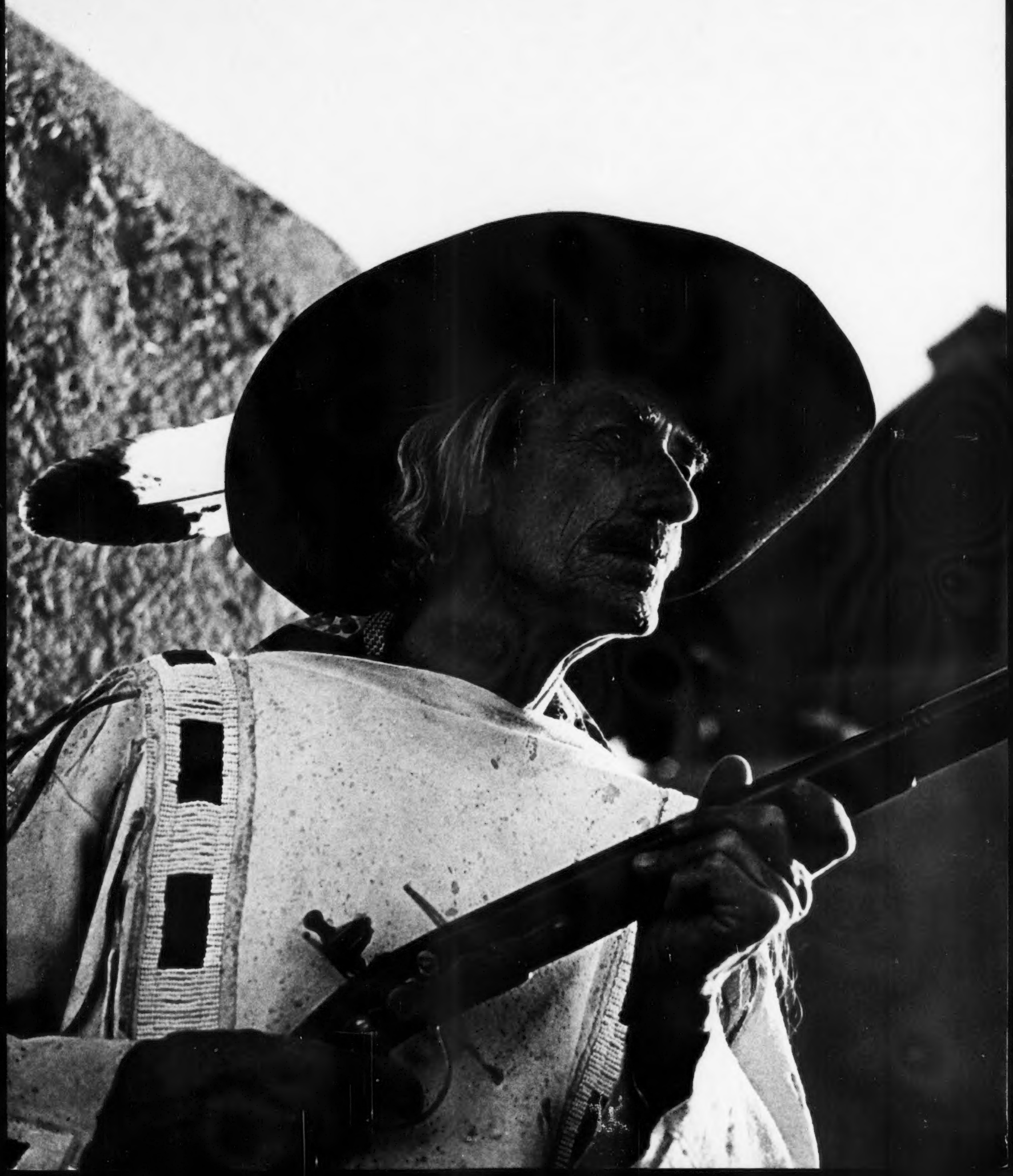
THE AMERICAN WEST



COLORADO 1876-1976

Cover: Latter-day frontiersman James O. Marshall helps re-create a colorful era in western history for visitors to the recently reconstructed Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site near La Junta, Colorado. For articles on the lively past and vivid present of this frontier landmark, see pages 10–21.

Above: This early view of an assayer's office in Central City, Colorado—a town once known as "the richest square mile on earth"—seems appropriate both as an introduction to this special issue and as a reminder of the Centennial State's rich mining heritage.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY GLENN CUERDEN

COLLECTION OF ROBERTA M. STARRY

Although this issue is primarily devoted to aspects of Colorado's heritage, one story—a pictorial survey of early recreational vehicles—deals with a phenomenon encompassing the entire American West. As an addendum to that article we here illustrate a pre-motorized version of the recreational vehicle: a four-horsepower "camper" used by a California couple to tour the northern half of their state in 1908. To learn what followed on their heels, turn to page 36.

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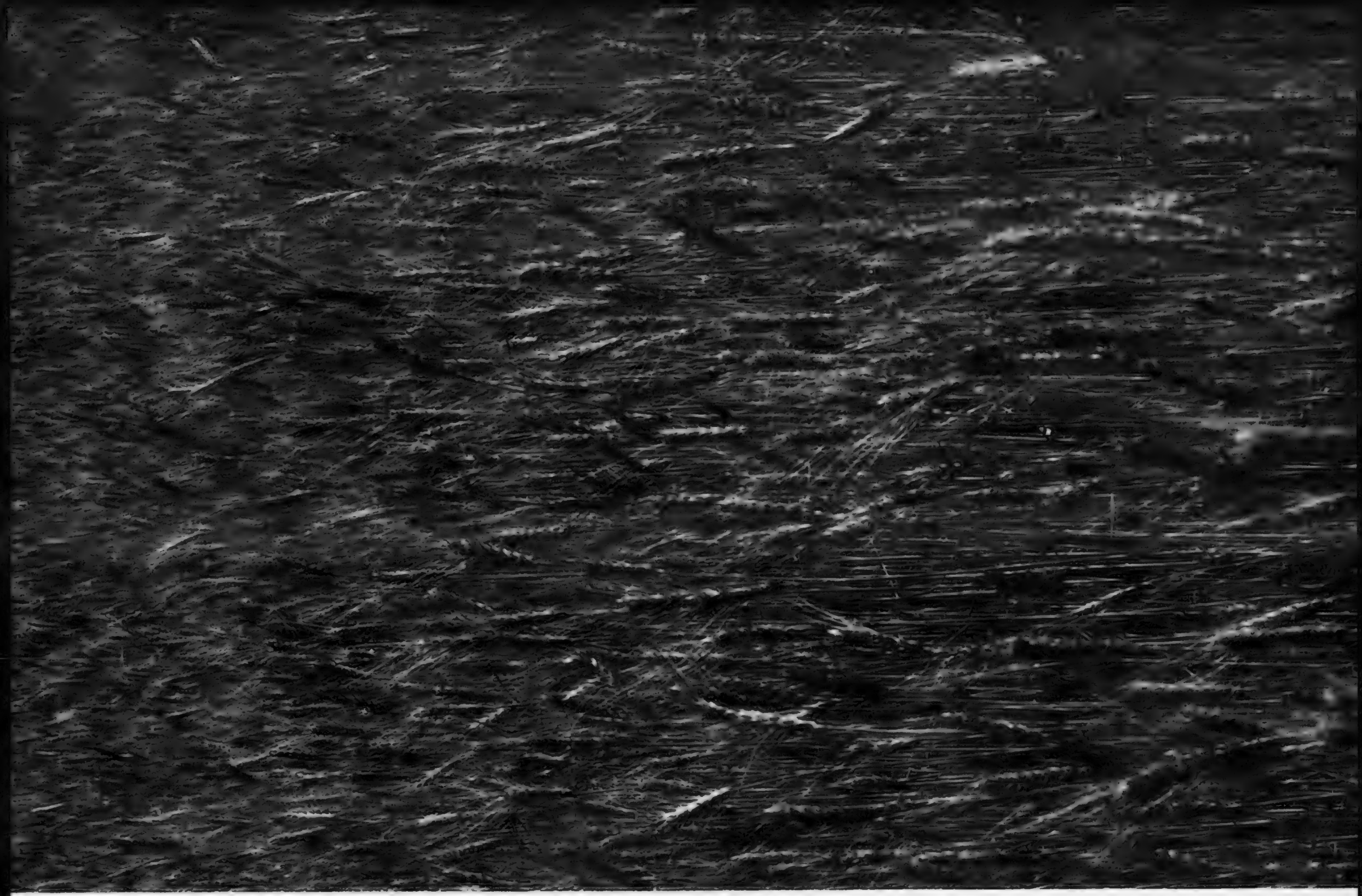
COLORADO

10,000 B.C. (or earlier)—Prehistoric people live in northern Colorado. • About 1 A.D.—Cave-dwelling Basket Maker Indians begin to farm in southwestern Colorado. • 1100-1300—Classic Pueblo culture, with elaborate multistoried dwellings, flourishes at Mesa Verde and then mysteriously dies out. • 1540-1541—Spanish conquistador Francisco de Coronado possibly touches Colorado while searching for the fabled Seven Cities of Cíbola. • 1706—Juan de Ulibarri enters eastern Colorado and formally claims it for Spain. • 1776—Fathers Domínguez and Escalante explore western Colorado while seeking a land route to Spanish California. • 1803—Through the Louisiana Purchase the young United States acquires northeastern Colorado. • 1806—Lt. Zebulon M. Pike sights later-named Pikes Peak during exploration of the new Louisiana Purchase. • 1820—Maj. Stephen H. Long's exploring expedition reaches the Rockies; Dr. Edwin James and others scale Pikes Peak. • 1832-1849—Bent's Fort serves as a major trading post. • 1842-1854—John C. Frémont crisscrosses Colorado during his explorations of the West. • 1846-1848—In the War with Mexico, the United States gains all Mexican territory north of the Rio Grande, including southwestern Colorado. • 1858-1859—Green Russell discovers gold at Cherry Creek; the gold rush to Colorado begins. • 1861—Colorado becomes a U.S. territory. • 1862—William Gilpin's Colorado troops defeat southern forces at La Glorieta Pass, New Mexico, dashing Confederate hopes in the West. • 1864—The Sand Creek Massacre of Cheyennes and Arapahos increases warfare between settlers and Indians. • 1866-1867—Congress twice passes a Colorado statehood bill, but President Andrew Johnson twice vetoes it. • 1870—The Denver Pacific and Kansas Pacific railroads reach Denver. • 1875—A fabulous silver strike is made near Leadville. • 1876—Colorado enters the Union as the thirty-eighth state. • 1891—Rich gold deposits are found at Cripple Creek. • 1906—Mesa Verde National Park is established. • 1915—Rocky Mountain National Park is created. • 1976—Colorado, with more than two million people, a $10 billion economy, thirty-four colleges and universities, and fifteen million acres of public forests and parks, celebrates its Centennial.

COLORADO SCENES ON THE NEXT FIVE PAGES: PYRAMID PEAK NEAR ASPEN BY ED COOPER; ASPEN FOREST BY ED COOPER; WINTER IN THE HISTORIC SAN JUAN MINING REGION BY ED COOPER; UNCOMPAHGRE VALLEY AND SNEFFELS MOUNTAIN RANGE BY DAVID MUENCH; WHEAT FIELD BY DAVID MUENCH.



BENT'S OLD FORT: CASTLE IN THE DESERT

by Walter Briggs
photography by Glenn Cuerden

SEVENSCORE YEARS AGO a great castle of commerce shimmered on the north bank of the turgid Arkansas River in what is now the state of Colorado. Known across two-thirds of a continent as Bent's Fort, its adobe walls mingled high cheekbones born in Asia and high noses bred in Europe . . . fringed buckskins and vermilion-daubed bodies . . . peltries from the farther West and glass beads from the distant East Coast . . .

In time, Bent's Fort fell into disuse and slowly returned to the earth from which it had been fashioned. Yet it was too vibrant a memory to discard. Today, under the aegis of the National Park Service, it has risen anew.

Its packed soil echoes again, in our imagination, to trans-Appalachian drawls and the earlier *franglais* of far-roving French-Canadian voyageurs . . . to the shuffle of moccasins and the crunch of hobnailed boots . . . to the braying of mules and the neighing of mustangs . . .

Again, the earth-clean smell of adobe seems to blend with the pungency of Virginia tobacco smoked around fires of *retsina*—aromatic piñon branches . . . with the tang of wild mountain mint and the succulence of Charlotte Green's buffalo hump feasts . . . with the sage-smoke perfume of visiting Cheyenne maidens and the rancid sweat of mountain men loping in after half a year in the wilderness . . .

It doesn't take a mind's eye for us to see from the resurrected battlements what invariably enthralled newcomers, from jaded explorers to Plains-reared plowboys, those many years ago: snow-struck Pikes Peak off toward a Denver yet to rise and the Spanish Peaks—the Indian "Breasts of the World"—off toward a Taos Pueblo already at least half a millennium old.

Let our vision range backward to the dreams that caused those original walls to be raised here in southern Colorado.

Those dreams were shared by three men—brothers Charles and William Bent, English-descended scions of a frontier aristocracy, and Ceran de Hault de Lassus de St. Vrain, heir to French nobility. The Bents' father had been a judge; St. Vrain's grandfather a councillor to the guillotined Louis XVI.

At an age when twentieth-century sons are striving to become eagle scouts, Charles Bent, followed by his brother William, left Saint Louis and ranged far to the northwest to trade with the Indians. The brothers Bent exchanged the geegaws of their era's new industrialism for glossy beaver pelts, favored for men's hats. But they soon found that such cartels as the British Hudson's Bay Company and John Jacob Astor's American Fur were squeezing the little man out.

If little men they were (and in stature both were under five-seven), Charles and William were big in ambition. They itched to strike out on their own. To the southwest the Santa Fé Trail had opened trade with New Mexico in 1821. Across the Southern Plains and into the Rockies a melange of tribes awaited the benefactions of commerce. The Southwest beckoned.

Also out of Saint Louis, Ceran St. Vrain had hired on with a wagon train that lumbered the 800 miles down the Santa Fé Trail in 1824. Soon St. Vrain joined another caravan that pushed 550 miles farther south into Chihuahua. But he, too, was more ambitious than to slave for others.

In 1830, Charles, by now thirty-one years old, joined forces with St. Vrain at Santa Fé. The two agreed that

Rising massive and golden on the southeastern Colorado plain, reconstructed Bent's Fort looks much like it did almost a century and a half ago when it was the center of a great trading empire.

twenty-eight-year-old Ceran would merchandise cloth and hardware in New Mexico and Chihuahua in exchange for silver and Navajo blankets. William, twenty-one, would do business with the Indians, acquiring bison robes and other peltries for steel awls, axes, and other shiny products of civilization. Charles himself would handle purchasing and transport out of Missouri.

Thus Bent, St. Vrain and Company was organized on the spot.

As the heart of their projected mercantile empire, the new partners decided they needed a headquarters. It should be close enough to the buffalo grounds of the Plains to attract the Indians, yet not so far from mountain streams as to discourage another clientele—the new breed of free trappers. (The likes of Kit Carson and Bill Williams would continue to forage for pelts until beaver were trapped out and silk hats replaced beaver in popular favor.) With these conditions in mind, the partners chose a site where trade caravans forded the Arkansas, where wagoneers could rest up and fit out before careening south over the 7,900-foot Raton Mountains for the final 300-odd-mile stretch into New Mexico's capital.

Within range were Cheyennes, Arapahos, and Prairie Apaches to the north; Utes to the west; Pawnees to the east; Comanches and Kiowas to the south; and roving bands of Crows, Osages, Gros Ventres, and Shoshonis as well. These Indians generally were friendly, largely because William Bent was friendly. (He would even marry a highborn Cheyenne.) Still, Indians, especially Comanches, were not always pacific. The headquarters would have to be a fort as well as a trading post.

The Bents were familiar with the timbered stockades that passed for commercial and military forts in the north. They and St. Vrain were also familiar with the sun-dried, mud-brick structures of Mexican communities and Indian pueblos. They knew, too, that adobe was strong, fireproof, cool in blistering summer and warm in blizzard-swept winter —all qualities that timber lacked. Of adobe their fort would be built.

Probably in 1832 they paced off a rectangle about 115 feet by 135. They then imported some 150 masons from the Taos area. And down from the mountains they dragged and floated pine and cottonwood for doors and roof beams. By now Bent brothers George, eighteen, and Robert,

sixteen, may have come from Saint Louis to help.

In early 1834 when the fort was essentially finished, its walls, which averaged twenty-seven inches thick, rose fourteen feet high. Time would give the fort round bastions at diagonal corners, thirty-eight rooms on two levels, twenty-two fireplaces, and even a belfry. (Additions came readily with easily worked adobe.) At its zenith the fort measured a trapezoidal 130 by 175 by 185 feet—encompassing well over half the area of a modern football field.

It was, wrote urbane correspondent Matt Field of the *New Orleans Picayune* in 1839, "as though an air-built castle had dropped to earth . . . in the midst of the vast desert." This castellated imagery occurred to more than a few recipients of Bent-St. Vrain hospitality.

In concept and sheer mass, nothing could compare with Bent's Fort—as it soon became known—in the nearly two-thousand-mile span from the Mississippi to the Pacific.

And with Bent's Fort as a base, the Bent-St. Vrain imperial domain developed beyond the partners' wildest vision. The fort became a rendezvous for Indians, trappers, and trading caravans. From it roved commercial agents to treat with Indians in far places and to build subsidiary fortlike posts amid distant tribes. To it came U.S. troops on their first sorties to the Far West.

The company became as pervasive as the grizzly bears that roamed its domain. Its paws clutched north into Wyoming, South Dakota, and Nebraska; east to Kansas; as far west (in acquisition of horses) as California; southeast to Texas; and south, of course, to New Mexico and Chihuahua. The trading behemoths to the northwest retreated before its grasping claws.

Bent's Fort flourished for sixteen years. Yet as all empires have, Bent-St. Vrain crumbled and fell.

BENT'S FORT represented a premier pioneering thrust into the western heartland. It was at the center of a rich and colorful period in our nation's history. What better monument to the Bicentennial and to Colorado's Centennial than its reconstruction?

With wide public, state, and federal support, the National Park Service set to work in 1972. After intensive study, building began in May 1975—a resurrection literally from the ground up, for all that remained of the original fort were a few inch-high ridges. A year of work produced one of the most exact replicas of a historic structure to be found anywhere, at a cost of $1,508,000.

Today it takes only a little imagination to step into the past at Bent's Fort.

We approach the fort from the north to the sight of a watchtower that was originally equipped, one early chronicler tells us, with a "fine telescope." Atop it sits a belfry which once contained "two eagles, of the American bald species," until "one escaped unharmed, the other flew a short distance, and a Cheyenne shot him for the feathers." From a pole alongside flies the Stars and Stripes, with twenty-eight stars, as in the fort's heyday.

We enter through a pair of massive, iron-studded plank gates separated by a Hispanic *zaguán*, a covered entryway. Eight feet wide and seven feet high, it could accommodate even the biggest covered wagons.

Only a few Indians of most bands were permitted into the fort at one time. Whenever any grew boisterous, inside or out, manager William Bent ordered patrols to pace the four-foot-high battlements that enfiladed every direction. Even the friendly Southern Cheyennes, generally free to mosey about in any number, were shunted outside at sunset when the great gates were slammed shut.

The towers at the northeast and southwest corners caused some early visitors to liken the establishment to a medieval fortress. Rising to eighteen feet, they were cached with firearms, sabers, and fieldpieces. The howitzers belched smoke to honor the arrival of such mid-nineteenth-century VIPs as explorer John C. Frémont. They were never fired in anger, for Bent's Fort was never attacked.

Since it was isolated, Bent's Fort had to be self-sufficient. This required about sixty employees, including carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, gunsmiths. "I heard at one time as many as six different languages," noted a visitor: "French, Spanish, German, English, Comanche, Arapahoe —a perfect Babel of a place."

To the right, or west, stretch three warehouse rooms from which Bent-St. Vrain agents drew trade goods and returned with furs. What fabulous company entered these doors! —Uncle Dick Wootton, Mexican Sol Silver, Tom Fitzpatrick of the broken hand, Lucien Maxwell, Blackfoot John Smith, the mulatto Jim Beckwourth, and a host of other half-forgotten pathbreakers of the West.

The Bents frowned on trading in firewater. William dispensed an occasional small keg of whiskey, though, to meet the exigencies of cutthroat competition from other firms less concerned with Indian well-being. For further well-being, he insisted that his agents deal on the up-and-up. Cheating, common to other companies, could bring loss of esteem . . . eventual loss of business.

Along the plaza's east side is the trade room, where Indians, mountain men, and wagoneers drew personal supplies. William Bent's half-Indian son George would recall "such unusual luxuries as butter crackers, Bent's water crackers, candies of various sorts, and most remarkable of all, great jars of preserved ginger." What seemed to be the fort's own private brand of crackers was actually mass-produced by a distant cousin in Massachusetts.

Just south of the trade room is the fort's biggest chamber, the dining room, apparently made so large in order to accommodate crowds of diners with big frontier appetites. Francis Parkman, the celebrated author of *The California*

Four adobe walls, each fourteen feet high and more than two feet thick, shielded the fort against attack. Circular bastions at the northeast and southwest corners of the enclosure provided vantage points for a pair of small cannons.

and Oregon Trail, was delighted to find "a table laid with a white cloth." Another traveler used "knives and forks and plates" there for the first time in fifty days.

Adjoining is the room of chef Charlotte Green and her husband, Dick, who had been a Bent family slave in Missouri; beyond that is the kitchen. Besides her buffalo hump roasts, Charlotte Green was celebrated for slapjacks and pumpkin pies. About her bread, baked of unbolted flour, gourmets differed: "Bread, oh! bread again!" exclaimed westbound-emigrant Thomas Jefferson Farnham. "It's fit only to fuel a smoke-fire for coloring buckskin," groused Comanche Chief Old Wolf, who preferred the sweeter Mexican variety.

Adjacent to the kitchen, archeologists have uncovered a four-and-a-half-foot-deep, adobe-lined food cellar that is not cited in memoirs. Down here Charlotte Green presumably hung dressed poultry and cuts of beef and lamb. Since fresh vegetables were difficult to grow, she probably stored here such supplements to an all-meat diet as cornmeal and dried fruits and vegetables brought up from New Mexico.

A well room is to be seen at the plaza's northwest corner. Its well was inadequate to quench the needs of the fort's multitude, so each morning a venerable Irishman who had lost his toes to frostbite drove a cartload of barrels down to the Arkansas to be filled. This water he poured into a cistern—now restored—off the plaza's southeast corner.

Also on the ground level, abutting the trade room, is the council room. Bent's Fort, with its strategic location, was convenient for intertribal parleys and for meetings between Indians and military officers representing the U.S. government. Peace was good for Bent-St. Vrain business, and the partners were always ready to lend their good offices.

In 1835, Colonel Henry Dodge and a contingent of dragoons reined in here for a meeting with warring Arapahos, Osages, Cheyennes, and Pawnees. The council room resounded with orotund oratory as successive chiefs pledged eternal peace among themselves. When Dodge passed out medals stamped with a likeness of the Great White Father, President Andrew Jackson, the chiefs professed undying love for all palefaces.

Neither peace nor love lasted, but Bent-St. Vrain weathered persistent turmoil.

Next to the kitchen is William Bent's office and adjoining bedroom. The fort's owners "laid on pallets of

straw" and Spanish blankets, an early-day traveler tells us. Another Hispanic mode is typified here: calico wainscoting to keep whitewash on interior adobe walls from rubbing off on the occupant's clothing.

On the second level, near the southwest corner, you may look in on the fort clerk's quarters. Incumbent here from 1838 to 1841 was Alexander Barclay, an Englishman who called himself a "factor," or bookkeeper.

Barclay had an eye for Indian women. Some "are very handsome, [with] fine pleasing countenances, languishing dark eyes, long black hair, small hands and feet and a leg which would make a Parisian dame envious," but, alas, "the Indian blood and education will ever prevent them from rising above a stage of degraded brutality."

But Barclay soon smarted from a rejection. "I had conceived a liaison for the prettiest girl among the Cheyenne tribe," he wrote a confidant in England. He approached her father for her hand. A young brave had offered eight horses for her, the father replied. "I offered more than on calm reflection I can own without a blush," Barclay wrote. The father demanded still another horse. "As this exceeded fair trade—the additional horse he wished being worth (200) two hundred dollars, I declined any further conference on the subject." And so the father sold his daughter to the young brave.

Bookkeeper Barclay rationalized a consolation. "Reflection has taught me it was the happiest misunderstanding I was every party to, for if she behaved well I could not help being attached to her children and if she behaved ill she would have been discarded long, long before she was likely to have had any, and I should have been minus a pretty round sum of dollars." So, he asked his correspondent, "Give me credit for this symptom of Stoicism."

Also on the second level is what a fort employee called the "sanctum," a room reserved for St. Vrain's visits. St. Vrain had "a head as good as Daniel Webster's and had he been educated, would have made the greatest explorer and engineer living," judged one acquaintance. "I took him for a bragadocia [sic], but he is modest, says but little, does not drink, is kind hearted and brave as a lion."

In 1843, St. Vrain married Luz Beaubien, daughter of a well-to-do French-Canadian trader and a Taos woman of influential Hispanic family. "Languidly handsome," Señora St. Vrain would be described by the young American adventurer Lewis Garrard.

"Who could have supposed such a thing, they have a *regularly established billiard room!*" wrote Susan Shelby Magoffin, an early traveler on the Santa Fé Trail. Such a refinement was introduced, hypothesizes David Lavender in his *Bent's Fort*, to satisfy the tastes of city-raised George and Robert, the younger Bent brothers. Today you will find the billiard room next to the walkway to the southwest bastion.

Abutting the fort's south wall lies a corral—its walls some eight feet high and studded with needle-sharp cacti—almost as large as the fort itself. "Plunging and kicking in their restless hunger," visualizes Lavender, "the horses and mules were driven each dawn from their night's safety . . . to grazing land in the river's bottoms." Mexican *vaqueros* broke the wild ones.

IN 1846, historian Bernard DeVoto's *Year of Decision*, the United States went to war with Mexico, obstensibly over Texas, to manifest territorial destiny by conquering New Mexico and California. Bent's Fort, its strategic location again a military factor, became the major staging point for a grandiloquently named Army of the West. Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny arrived there in late July with 300 dragoons and 1,350 Missouri volunteers.

Eating the army's dust were Santa Fé Trail traders in some four hundred wagons. Among them were Samuel Magoffin and his bride, the aforementioned Susan. An attractive and gifted granddaughter of Kentucky's first governor, young Susan Magoffin gives us one of history's most vivid descriptions of Bent's Fort and of life therein made clangorous by the military presence.

At her first glance, Susan Magoffin mentions that the rooms "have dirt floors—which are sprinkled with water several times a day to prevent dust." Among them is "a barber's do." Also cited is "an ice house, which receives perhaps more customers than any other." She neglects to mention the location of the icehouse—surely the only one west of Missouri; historians posit that it stood along the river.

Susan Magoffin, who was pregnant, was ensconced in a room with two windows, "one looking out on the plain, the other . . . on the *patio* or yard." The only room matching this description is at the northwest corner of the second level. Into it Magoffin servants trundled "bed, chairs, wash basin, table furniture"—luxurious appointments by Bent's Fort standards—brought up from the Magoffin carriage.

"There is the greatest possible noise in the *patio*. The shoeing of horses, neighing, and braying of mules, the crying of children, the scolding and fighting of men, are all enough to turn my head."

The first evening, "I sat in the parlour with *las señoritas*, the wife of Mr. George Bent and some others." Like St. Vrain, both Charles and George Bent had married into Taos families. "One of them sat and combed her hair all the while notwithstanding the presence of Mr. Lightendoffer [Leitensdorfer, an American trader], whose lady (a Mexican) was present." Scandalous! "After the combing she paid her devoirs to a crock of oil or grease of some kind, and it is not exaggeration to say it almost *driped* [sic] from her hair to the floor." Ugh! This dramatic scenario apparently was staged in the council room.

Inside the fort a maze of walkways and corridors connected the multitude of storerooms, offices, shops, and living quarters that formed a self-sufficient world on the edge of the wilderness.

On July 30, "Well, this is my nineteenth birthday!" But that night, despite the ministrations of a French physician who had traveled with the trade caravan, Susan Magoffin suffered a miscarriage. "I sunk off into a kind of lethargy, in *mi alma*'s arms"—as she called her husband Samuel.

Poignantly, "My situation was very different from that of an Indian woman in the room below me. She gave birth to a fine healthy baby, about the same time, *and in half an hour after, she went to the River and bathed herself and it.* . . . It is truly astonishing to see what customs do."

Next day Samuel Magoffin's brother James rode into Bent's Fort on a secret mission for President James K. Polk. Don Santiago, as his multitudinous Mexican amigos called him, would seek to subvert New Mexico's leadership.

Colonel Kearny assigned Captain Philip St. George Cooke, one of the army's ablest young officers, to escort James Magoffin to Santa Fé, under a flag of truce, with twelve dragoons. Cooke, grumbling that such a mission might rob him of a chance for combat, met Magoffin in an unidentified upstairs room for a stirrup cup.

"A pitcher covered with the dew of promise caught our eyes; it brimmed with broken ice, and there was a suggestive aroma which softened our hearts. We fraternized . . ." Cooke's dew of promise was most likely potent Taos Lightning, distilled by opportunistic Americans near that community, while the suggestive aroma was probably wild mint gathered up the nearby Purgatoire River.

In Santa Fé, Don Santiago indeed subverted General Manuel Armijo, the department's governor, and Colonel Diego Archuleta, second in command, with a duplicity that the Central Intelligence Agency might envy. Besides contending Socratically with Armijo that resistance was useless, he probably bribed the governor with gold dollars. He definitely bribed Colonel Archuleta: The United States claimed New Mexico territory only as far west as the Rio Grande, he asserted; seize the land beyond, on through Arizona, as your personal fief.

Thanks perhaps entirely to James Magoffin, Kearny, now a brigadier general, rode to bloodless victory in Santa Fé. Then he reneged on Magoffin's territorial deal with Archuleta by claiming all of New Mexico into California for the United States. Next, with a hundred dragoons, he forged on to California to solidify a premature conquest that

More than a century after its original walls melted back into the soil, Bent's Fort again echoes to the braying of mules, the clang of the blacksmith's hammer, and the shuffle of moccasined feet—a living monument to the frontier.

Captain John C. Frémont and a U.S. naval commander had begun. From the Bent's Fort base, American destiny had been made manifest with the seizure of half of Mexico's sovereign domain.

The destiny of Bent's Fort itself soon was made manifest, for the Army of the West had stripped Bent-St. Vrain of stores, glutted its repair shops, and overgrazed its environs. Business came to a standstill. In the army's hoofprints rode successor troops, settlers, gold seekers, bison hunters. Inevitably the Indians took umbrage. The Southern Plains would know little peace for some forty years.

Placatory though it might be, Bent-St. Vrain was caught in the middle. The grand old trading days were gone forever.

Meantime, Charles Bent, whom Kearny had named civil governor of New Mexico, was scalped to death in a Taos uprising in January 1847; brother George died at the fort of "consumption" later that same year. (Robert had been slain by Comanches as early as 1841.) St. Vrain pulled out of his partnership with William Bent in 1849 to devote himself to business in New Mexico.

The final blows came with a cholera epidemic, probably fostered by immigrants, that spread throughout the tribes and with the army's refusal to pay a paltry $12,000 for the fort as a permanent frontier post.

In ultimate disillusion, William Bent removed all trade goods from the fort and then set fire to the storerooms and exploded a powder magazine.

As this towering smoke signal broadcast the end of Bent's Fort, William moved his family and a few employees thirty-eight miles down the Arkansas to Big Timbers.

FIRST in a temporary stockade and then in a stone edifice that became known as Bent's New Fort, William Bent tried to revive the Bent-St. Vrain empire. But trade languished. On the eve of the Civil War he leased the new fort to the army and retired to a ranch on the upper Purgatoire River. He died there in 1869.

The shell of what then was called Bent's Old Fort became a way station for a stagecoach line which ran from Kansas City to Santa Fé for twenty years until 1881. It was next reduced to cattle corrals. What William Bent's fire and powder didn't accomplish, erosion and the scavenging of adobe bricks by farmers and ranchers eventually did.

Then in 1921 a historic Arkansas River flood all but completed the leveling.

The Daughters of the American Revolution, mindful that Bent's Fort symbolized the evolutionary opening of the West, erected a granite marker there in 1912 and acquired title to the site in 1920. In 1954, Colorado took over the title and granted custody to the State Historical Society. Six years later it was designated a National Historic Site, and in 1963 the National Park Service assumed its administration. Actual reconstruction began in 1975.

A primary objective of the reconstruction was authenticity. Memorabilia abounded, but much of it—with such notable exceptions as Susan Magoffin's—did not describe the fort with any exactitude. Then in the early 1970s came a breakthrough: a diary and sketches by Lieutenant James W. Abert of the Topographic Engineers was found. A Yankee Renaissance man exemplifying a brilliant band of military scientists and explorers, Abert, in his mid-twenties, had visited Bent's Fort with Frémont in 1854 and with Kearny the following year, and he had drawn architectural designs of the fort on the back and margins of a watercolor portrait of a Cheyenne chief.

Archeological study amended a few of Abert's dimensions and unearthed thousands of bottles, ceramics, and other artifacts.

Inevitable congressional and bureaucratic red tape impeded progress for some years, but persistence prevailed. Architect George A. Thorson, a lifetime student of Colorado architecture, was hired from a Denver firm to supervise park service planning of the reconstruction. With authenticity as his goal, Thorson also pledged "to make the structure as stable as possible, to make it last a hundred years or more in contrast to the sixteen-year life of the original."

To this end, Thorson specified a three-foot-deep concrete foundation for the walls. Workers accustomed to straight-line foundations balked at designs for a wavering course until the architect pointed out that the original irregularities derived from mud-plaster patching represented "the true sculptural handmade beauty of adobe."

For the core of the walls Thorson used what he called "stabilized adobes"—machine-made with a bit of cement added. Walls that showed were laid with true adobe by a crew brought up from Taos.

The contractor was Emil Gimeno, a Denvor Hispano and history buff. Even Gimeno, watching the new Mexican masons, found that it took him "almost a month to quit thinking about modern construction methods and to begin thinking how they originally did it." As of old, the new exterior adobe will have to be mud-patched each year.

Supporting posts and *viga* ceiling beams were shaped with broadaxes for similitude. The original doors, windows, and other timbered members had been hand-adzed. But where could such equipment be found nowadays? "One of the workers remembered some old tools abandoned behind his uncle's barn in Taos," Thorson relates. "Sure enough, [there were] two adzes that only needed the rust removed and new handles."

In the reconstructed fort, all furnishings are contemporary originals or authentic reproductions. Electrical wiring is hidden. Radiant heating apparatus is buried beneath earth floors; fireplaces are functional. Plastic candles, coated to simulate buffalo tallow, flicker on a thirty-second cycle so realistically that one is hard put not to mistake them for the real thing.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site lies sixty-five miles east of Pueblo and eight miles east of La Junta on Colorado Highway 194. On July 25 of this year some five thousand history-conscious guests, including Colorado's young governor, Richard Lamm, assembled there for a superbly merited dedication. Among those present were half a dozen from as far away as Rochester and Los Angeles, who identified themselves as third- fourth- and fifth-generation Bents.

The Park Service anticipates that Bent's Fort will draw up to two thousand visitors a day. These sightseers will be free to wander with the help of a self-guiding minifolder and TV monitors retelling the fort's history. Costumed interpreters, cast as trappers, *vaqueros*, blacksmiths, and the like, will demonstrate their skills and answer questions.

As we wander about Bent's Fort today, we may recall another, earlier visitor—that debonair New Orleans newspaperman Matt Field, to whom the fort seemed a castle dropped from the air into the desert. Once inside its great gates, "the fatted calf was killed for us and the hoarded luxuries . . . were produced," Field wrote. "The tenants of the Fort were merry fellows . . . the time was mutually appreciated, and by no means suffered to pass unimproved." And so it is for us these 137 years later.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Thanks are due to George A. Thorson and Merrill J. Mattes of the National Park Service and to Emil Gimeno, contractor for the reconstruction of Bent's Old Fort, for information provided in the preparation of this article.

For a history of this Colorado landmark see *Bent's Fort* by David Lavender (University of Nebraska, 1972); for a review of investigations leading to its reconstruction see *Bent's Old Fort: An Archeological Study* by Jackson W. Moore, Jr. (Pruett, 1973).

Bent's Old Fort is also the subject of a special Summer 1976 issue of *The Colorado Magazine*, published by the State Historical Society of Colorado, 200 14th Avenue, Denver, CO 80203. Available by mail for $2 per copy.

Walter Briggs *was for many years a* New York Herald Tribune *correspondent in Asia; more recently he was editor of* New Mexico *magazine. He is author of the recently released book* Without Noise of Arms: The 1776 Domínguez-Escalante Search for a Route from Santa Fe to Monterey.

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FREMONT AT BENT'S FORT

by Ferol Egan

Explorer John Charles Frémont's second expedition began in the spring of 1843 and ended fourteen months later. During that time Frémont and his men threw a grand loop around a great portion of the American West. Heading northwest from the Missouri River toward the Oregon Country, they explored a part of the Great Salt Lake; traveled down the Columbia to Fort Vancouver; turned southeast and discovered the nature of the Great Basin; and crossed the Sierra Nevada in winter to reach Sutter's Fort in California in March 1844.

The completion of this America odyssey took Frémont and his party—including map maker Charles Preuss and frontiersman Kit Carson—eastward across the Mojave Desert and then north to Utah Lake. There they met the famed mountain man Joseph Reddeford Walker, who guided them on through the Rocky Mountains and down to the headwaters of the Arkansas River near present-day Pueblo, Colorado.

From Pueblo the going was easy. They were headed for Bent's Fort, the great southern Colorado trading post on the Santa Fé Trail that was a meeting place for trappers, traders, Indians, and adventurers of all sorts during the heyday of the fur trade.

ON THE PLAINS, the hot winds of summer had yellowed the bunchgrass, dried up the small creeks, and cracked the hardened mud in the old buffalo wallows. The men and their horses moved along the road beside the Arkansas River, thankful for the shade the trees offered. Then as they headed away from the river, squinting in the bright glare of the sun, the steady sound of hoofbeats was suddenly shattered by loud explosions. The startled horses and mules skittered and jumped, almost throwing their riders. Frémont was bewildered by the noise, but Kit Carson and Joe Walker knew what it was. Hell, it was a welcome home! Ahead was a good sight, a familiar place, a second home to Carson when he wasn't in Taos.

There in the distance, standing in the open like a lost pueblo, was the adobe stronghold called Bent's Fort. From the round towers at the northeast and southwest angles of this rectangular post, puffs of white smoke rolled out of portholes like small thunderheads, followed by a swishing in the air and the echo of cannon fire. Then a large iron bell in the belfry of the watchtower above the thick-planked entry gate tolled its welcome. And atop the belfry the scorching summer wind whipped the oversized American flag back and forth in a dance of color that threatened to snap the ash flagpole.

As Frémont viewed Bent's Fort for the first time, the size of it amazed him. The Bent brothers had not gone about things in a small manner when they had decided that this was the proper location for their post—one that would give them an advantage in dealing with Indians, fur trappers, and Santa Fé traders.

Charles Bent, the oldest of the Bent brothers, had sketched the original plan for the adobe fort, for he had been the head of the clan since the death of their father. But it was William Bent and his partner, Ceran St. Vrain, who paced off the lines of the structure and measured everything with a com-

In this modern painting by Jack Roberts, Bent's Fort looms above the plain much as Frémont must have seen it for the first time in 1844.

pass. The result—what Frémont saw before him—was a fort of immense proportions. The great front wall, which faced toward the trail that saw a steady flow of freighter caravans bound for Santa Fé, was about 137 feet long, 14 feet high, and at least 2 feet thick. The other walls, equally as high and thick, varied in length from 130 to 185 feet. At two corners of the fort were 18-foot towers. From these, guards armed with muskets and small fieldpieces could stop any attempt to take the fort. Behind and adjoining the big western wall was a corral that was almost as large as the fort itself. While the corral walls were only 6 to 8 feet high, they were not an easy climb for potential raiders, for their broad tops were covered with a thick growth of cactus.

After all the weary weeks and months spent riding through vast stretches of the American West, trying to fill in blank spaces on maps that merely listed the unexplored regions together as the Great American Desert, arrival at this citadel of commerce on the north bank of the Arkansas River meant more than simply reaching another fort. It also meant that the wilderness was behind them at last. Even Saint Louis was now little more than thirty days away. Frémont and his men fired rifles and pistols into the air, shouted for joy, and coaxed their tired mounts into a trot, then a gallop, as they moved closer to the waving, shouting men standing beside a brass cannon outside the main gate.

Greetings were exchanged with thirty-year-old George Bent and the others as the party slid their horses to a halt. The men dismounted, shook hands all around, and walked through the open gate. Inside, they felt the sudden coolness of the tunnel between the thick walls of the warerooms, then passed through the open inner gate and into the *placita.* There was a faint aroma of cooking in the air. No doubt the famous Black cook Charlotte Green, who claimed she was the only lady in the whole Indian country, was busy preparing dinner for the officials of the fort and any special company that might arrive.

The brass cannon was pulled inside the main gate and

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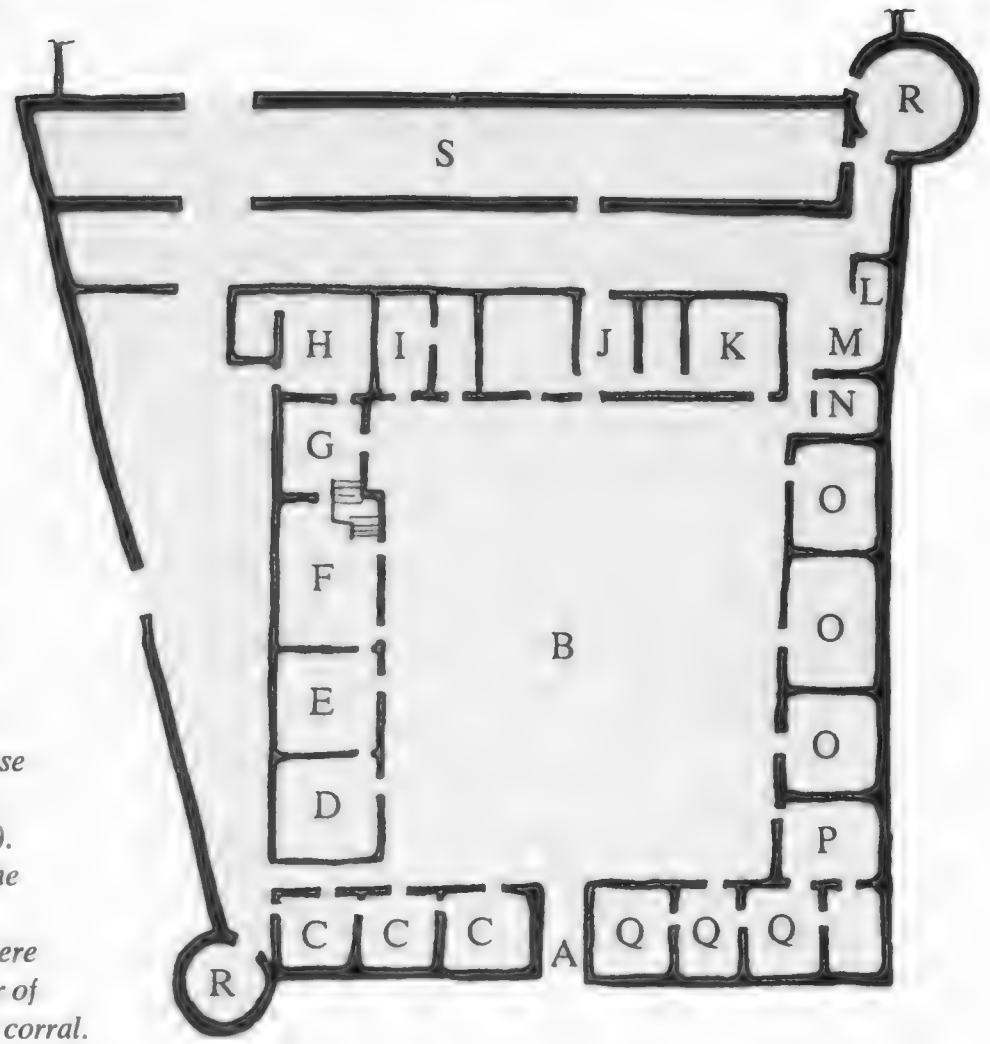

The wilderness outpost Frémont found on the bank of the Arkansas River was impressive both in its size and facilities. Entering the main gate (A), the visitor stepped into a spacious plaza (B). Doorways around the perimeter of the plaza opened into a complex of buildings, including several trade rooms (C); a council room (D); main trade room (E); dining room (F); cook's quarters (G); kitchen (H); William Bent's quarters (I); blacksmith shop (J) and carpenter shop (K); powder magazine (L); cistern for water storage (M); privy (N); warehouse rooms for trade goods (O); well room (P); and quarters for travelers and laborers (Q). Additional rooms on the second floor of the fort included more living quarters and a billiard room. Dominating the structure were two bastions or towers (R), and to the rear of the fort were a wagon shed (S) and a large corral.

rolled back into the breezeway as Frémont stopped to view the establishment for the first time. The place was large enough to house two hundred men, and the corrals could hold at least three or four hundred animals. There were ground-floor apartments, some second-story rooms, warehouses for goods, a main kitchen, central dining hall, blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, tailor's shop—where a French tailor from New Orleans did his best with the materials at hand—and a huge press for packing buffalo hides into bale-like bundles. Milk cows, turkeys, chickens, and even peacocks added to the fort's self-containment. There was a well of excellent water, though it tended to run low during the dry season and extra water had to be brought in barrels from the Arkansas River. The biggest shortage the men faced was fresh vegetables to offset the steady meat diet. Attempts to plant crops had proved unsuccessful in the hard soil around the fort, but Mexican traders did bring corn meal and dried vegetables in to trade for other goods.

To the amazement of first-time visitors, there were caged wild birds of the region scattered about: mockingbirds, magpies, and even bald-headed eagles. Added to their color were the beautiful spreading tail feathers of peacocks. The sharp cries of these birds never ceased to astound the Indians who came to the fort to trade.

But not only caged birds gave color and life to this crossroads in the southwestern wilderness. There were times when Cheyennes and other Plains Indians were invited into the *placita* to sing and dance in celebration of a victory over one of their foes or simply because Misstanstar, Owl Woman, William Bent's Cheyenne wife, had become homesick for the traditions of her people.

Free-living mountain men also came to the fort—to drink, to watch a dance, or even to dance themselves, in celebration of being alive for another trapping season. These men included all the nationalities that made up frontier America: French-Canadians, métis who were more Indian than French, Mexicans from Taos or Santa Fé, and stray Irishmen or Germans who had drifted beyond the Mississippi and found the free and wild life to their liking. There were men like mulatto Jim Beckwourth, whose tales were only as strange and colorful as his life; and Dick Green, who came west as Charles Bent's slave and was given his freedom for bravery but gained greater fame through the marvelous culinary talents of his wife Charlotte, who was in turn as famous for her dancing as her cooking. Like the free and wondrous mixture of people who gathered around Sutter's Fort in Alta California, the regulars, the drifting visitors, and the men in need, all found their way to Bent's Fort. The fort was in

the right place at the right time. It was open for business, pleasure, or war; and it was prepared for any of the three or a combination of all of them.

THAT NIGHT, that July 1, 1844, Frémont and his men were entertained in royal fashion. A white tablecloth was spread on the dining table, and the aroma of Charlotte Green's cooking was enough to make a man sell whatever the devil might require to have such a cook along on an expedition. Her bread, her pies, the things she could do with chickens or a turkey or two, the flavor that buffalo meat took on with her seasoning, and the way she put vegetables together in a casserole with chili and wild oregano—all these made any wilderness man wonder if he'd really eaten in the past months or merely gotten by on imagination.

Before the meal, George Bent served what were called "hailstorms," a house specialty. Ice was brought from the ice house; wild mint came from upstream where there was enough shade and dampness; and the whisky was a touch better than Taos Lightning. Be damned! This was not rotgut or aguardiente straight out of the jug—this was a gentleman's drink to warm a man's heart and ease his sore body. And if, after dinner, a man felt up to it, if he could handle a cue, above the headquarters in a second-story room was a billiard table that had been brought all the way from Missouri.

The first evening off the trail, the first night at Bent's Fort, was not something a man would easily forget. After the drinks, after the dinner, there was talk. Talk of where they had been and what they had seen. Talk of men long dead and bones scattered somewhere in the wilderness. Talk of bad times, good times, and the sheer joy of living long enough to cross another ridge and find another stretch of untouched land or another beaver stream where a man might plant his float stick and come up with a rich, thick pelt.

That night there was no need for any of Frémont's men to stand guard duty. Instead, there was a good bed waiting for each. But first, there was another drink, a smoke beside the fireplace, and a last yarn before stepping into the night air and breathing deeply as the moonlight outlined the Spanish Peaks to the southwest and Pikes Peak to the northwest.

For three more days and nights, Frémont and his men remained at the fort. It was a time to savor Charlotte Green's excellent cuisine, a time to let go and enjoy what was really a vacation. Only the expedition's carping topographer, Charles Preuss, was unhappy. To him, Bent's Fort was a dreary place where swarms of mosquitoes feasted upon his blood. But it wasn't only the mosquitoes that bothered Preuss. Scorching days, with the temperature over one hundred degrees, and a hot wind made him anxious to move on. He wanted to complete the long journey and get back to the company of gentlemen again. He had hardly been able to tolerate the half-civilized mountain men and voyageurs when it was vital to have them along, but he had reached the end of his patience with such wild men. Frémont might admire them. Well, that was all right. He was a foolish and romantic lieutenant. But Preuss himself had seen more of these barbaric creatures than he wished. As for the fort, it was just another collection of primitive mud buildings. The food was good—there was no getting around that. But the idea of a white tablecloth on a rough wooden table, the pretension that somehow a mint julep and a little service in such an atmosphere gave the place stature—that was more than Preuss was willing to admit. Better liquor, far better food, he was willing to grant this to anyone. But none of it changed the surroundings or the company. All of it was a bare notch above the Indians with their half-cooked meat, their naked children, and their lice. As for George Bent's gracious hospitality, the grousing map maker simply ignored it and assumed that anything he was getting was his by right of his station in life.

But what Preuss thought didn't change the plan to stay on through the Fourth of July. Frémont was thoroughly enjoying himself at Bent's Fort, and he looked forward to the feast that Charlotte Green would serve on Independence Day. And he was not disappointed. The table almost sagged with the best the fort had to offer. Fresh vegetables had even been brought into the kitchen from a few gardens at the settlement of Pueblo. There was ample buffalo meat, roast beef, turkeys, chickens, plenty of "hailstorms," good coffee laced with milk, and fresh pies and cakes. Then as cigars and aguardiente were passed, the Cheyenne dancers chanted and circled the *placita,* mountain men let out wild yells, and Charlotte Green and her friend, the half-Indian Rosalie, whirled about in an American backwoods dance that was as free as the day being celebrated. Added to all this were the firing of cannons, three cheers for the Yankees and to hell with the British, and another round of drinks to toast the glorious Fourth of July as a long-bearded fiddler stomped his foot and started another dance.

In the morning, Frémont and his men thanked George Bent for his hospitality and for the new life his bountiful table had put into their tired bodies. Kit Carson and Joseph Walker bid good-bye to Frémont and the others, took their pay, and headed out for Taos, where Carson's wife Josepha waited for him. Carson was on his way home with a good stake as his wages—a total of $1,025 plus his horse and mule. Joe Walker picked up $165 for his short stint as guide from the Great Basin through the Rocky Mountains. Two other men, Charles Town and Louis Anderson, had already left the expedition at Pueblo. But all the rest pulled out of the main gate at Bent's Fort and struck the wagon road eastward along the Arkansas River.

They were homeward bound, and Bent's Fort had given them a proper send-off.

Ferol Egan *is the author of* El Dorado Trail: The Story of the Gold Rush Routes Across Mexico *and* Sand in a Whirlwind: The Paiute Indian War of 1860. *Mr. Egan's forthcoming book on Frémont will be followed by a novel,* The Taste of Time.

THE FIFTY-NINERS

by Robert G. Athearn

DURING THE SUMMER of 1858, newspapers in eastern Kansas began to publish occasional reports about the existence of gold deposits in the westernmost part of that territory. Merchants in the Missouri River Valley, always on the lookout for more outfitting trade, displayed a great willingness to believe what they read and to spread the good word as well. It was, however, a surprisingly hard gospel to preach, for rumors of gold in what was then vaguely known as Pikes Peak Country had circulated for years without any hard evidence. Yet a few people did listen that autumn when an old-time fur trader named John Cantrell came back from the mountains and reported that a party of Georgians led by William Green Russell had made a thousand dollars in ten days' panning. Cantrell had no gold to show, but his word was considered good, and as his story spread, it grew.

About that time a prospector named William B. Parsons returned from Cherry Creek, a tributary of the South Platte River, bringing with him a few wild turkey quills filled with "dust" that he and his partners had panned. He had not been particularly impressed by the find or by the area's prospects, so he was amazed by the talk being generated in the river towns. Although the rest of the nation showed little real interest in the matter, the eastern press noted that despite the lateness of the season, several small parties had gone to the Cherry Creek diggings, where they laid out a cluster of small towns soon to be known as Denver. Meanwhile, during the idle winter months that followed, young men in the Middle West, many of them out of work because of the recent financial panic, talked late into the evening about the stories coming out of the West. By spring a good many of them had decided to cross the plains and see for themselves. As one of them remarked, his people were of pioneer stock "and always eager to go somewhere else." In later years he admitted that few booms had ever started on slimmer evidence, but even if he had realized that fact in the spring of 1859, he said it would not have altered his determination to make the trip.

During those exciting weeks, thousands of optimists milled about the Missouri River towns with guns, picks, blankets, and a few provisions slung over their shoulders, ready for the great gold hunt. Long lines of wagons waited at river crossings, and arriving steamboats were loaded to the gunwales. As those who had been issued their supplies left town, new customers appeared, and the merchants beamed with joy at the human stream that circulated through their shops.

For these outfitting towns the stampede triggered by rumors of gold to the west was an absolute godsend. They had experienced a recent boomlet in business as supply towns for the army's advance upon Utah in the recent Mormon "war," but when that bonanza played out and depression briefly visited the nation, times became exceedingly tight. Even if the Pikes Peak excitement produced little gold, they welcomed it, for the mere rumor brought forth young hopefuls in need of outfits for their great adventure. Since talk was cheap, the merchants expended great amounts of it, and through their local editors they passed the word that a big payoff was waiting at the foot of the Rockies. Before long, tellers of tales,

newspapers included, were vying with one another to see who could spin the most fascinating story about the golden West. Almost every town between Kansas City and Council Bluffs employed agents who collared potential miners and let them in on the worst-kept secret of the era.

To cross the plains the newly outfitted argonauts had a choice of several well-known trails. The old Platte River route had been well-worn by the Oregonians, the Mormons, and the Forty-Niners; and because of forts and occasional ranches along its twisting course, that familiar roadway was popular. An even older route, the Santa Fe Trail, could be followed as far as Bent's Fort; by then switching to the Cherokee Trail, travelers reached the base of the mountains near the site of Pueblo, not far south of the reported excitement. Green Russell and his party had used this trail. There were two other possibilities: the Smoky Hill route that ran out along the Kansas River to the Smoky Hill Fork, a stream that had its source in eastern Colorado; or the Republican River road that paralleled the river of that name and brought its users close to Big Sandy Creek, within range of Denver. The latter was the route chosen by the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Company, the first stage line to serve the new mining country.

Despite the existence of these trails, those who set off for the mountains that spring, whether in well-equipped wagon groups or with the flimsiest kind of equipment, embarked upon a journey that was far from routine. For years trappers had made the same crossing, and now the river-town newspapers played down the country's aridity, its lack of fuel, and the distances between watering places. As a result, many innocents believed they had only to follow the sinking sun to reach Colorado. Yet before long, warnings were heard that the ease of the journey had been exaggerated. In addition to the ordinary hardships that might be anticipated, there were rumors of starvation and even of cannibalism.

Such tales did not slow the flood, and out into the wilderness went thousands, by horseback, in wagons, and on foot. Apparently the Great American Desert, so foreboding a patch of country in the atlases of the day, was not taken seriously, for two unaccompanied women set off from Leavenworth, driving a team of horses, and completed the trip without incident. Old-timers blanched when they heard that one independent young woman had struck off afoot and alone, firmly declining the many proffered rides. Those who were in a hurry and had a hundred dollars for fare rode the stagecoaches. That amount, wrote a disgruntled passenger, entitled one to "fifteen inches of seat, with a fat man on one side, a poor widow on the other, a baby in your lap, a bandbox over your head, and three or four more persons immediately in front leaning against your knees. . . ." As many as a hundred thousand people were believed to have started for the "new California" that spring, but less than half of them actually reached it. Of those who did, perhaps no more than twenty-five thousand ever witnessed actual gold panning.

There was a middle ground between the fate of those who turned to cannibalism and those who went west by coach in some discomfort but with relative speed. A young girl who made the trip by covered wagon remembered it as reasonably uneventful and, at times, almost homelike. Tied to the rear of her family's wagon was a sheet-iron stove that was set up at mealtimes; fired by buffalo chips gathered along the way, it produced satisfactory results. Rather than hunker before an open fire and gnaw at bits of blackened meat as many of

A PIKE'S PEAKER

the young bachelors did, the family tried to preserve decorum and a semblance of formality while dining. A large square of rag carpet, also used in the tent at night, was spread out, and in its center was placed a box that served as a table. The spring seats of the wagon, supplemented by campstools, provided seating. The memory of fried pork and gravy, pancakes, and coffee served family-style on a remote prairie stayed with the woman for years after she had settled in Colorado. Not all families found homelife on the prairie so enticing. One discouraged woman told the folks back in Illinois that plains travel was difficult for members of her sex. Each night on the plains she slept in a damp wagon, and she spent most of her days in the rain. "I do not know what dry clothing is," she wrote.

Group travel was not confined to family units. Single men banded together in what they termed "companies" for cheaper travel and the additional protection afforded by numbers. Some of the companies even had names, indicating organization and a common sense of purpose or perhaps merely togetherness. These groups ate together, slept together, joked together, and hoped together. And when they arrived in the mining country they tended to stay together, at least in subgroups of twos and threes—digging ore-bearing soil, operating sluices, and retorting their gold as a group. So their camaraderie continued, and even after they had parted company, they sometimes crossed trails and even joined up again to continue their effort cooperatively.

The traffic was not all in one direction during those tumultuous spring weeks of 1859. Those who left a little later met

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a number of discouraged and even bitter farm boys who had gone out, "seen the elephant," and were on their way home again, where they would tell friends that Pikes Peak was overrated. Mottoes painted on canvas wagon tops that had resolutely promised "Root, Hog, or Die!" were now replaced by a sad admission that "The Hog's Dead." Other returning slogans commented crisply, "We've Seen Him," referring to the mythical elephant. One canvas bore a short verse that explained the dilemma of those who had not dared stay home for fear of missing the chance of a lifetime. It read:

We're "humbugged" if we stay at home,
Or "humbugged" if we leave;
There's few reports that come or go
But will some deceive.

Most of the "go-backers," as they were called, tended to take their troubles philosophically, writing off the experience as another frontier venture that had failed to pay, but some were bitter against the promoters who had led them on. In addition to the river-town newspaper editors who had waxed eloquent on the subject of gold, a number of guidebooks to the promised land had appeared on the market in time for the spring rush. One of them described the way west as seen by D. C. Oakes, who earlier had made the round trip. When he set forth again that memorable spring, the author met a number of his readers who were making a footsore, hungry trip eastward. Some of them, who had already threatened to burn down a few Missouri River towns when they returned, nearly mobbed Oakes for writing such a colorful bit of prose. But they thought better of it and merely hanged him in effigy, after which they formulated an epitaph that was to become famous. It read: "Here lie the remains of D. C. Oakes; Who was the starter of this damned hoax." Except for an additional version of the couplet, which included the name of William Byers, who was becoming well-known as the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News*, the other guidebook authors failed to get equal treatment at the hands of the aggrieved; their names did not rhyme with "hoax." Meanwhile Oakes reached Colorado again. Rather than becoming a rich miner he operated a sawmill and later served as an Indian agent and as a deputy U.S. land surveyor. He lived to be one of Colorado's respected pioneers.

PIKES PEAK IN SIGHT

THE TURMOIL on the plains, characterized by the wanderings of hungry men and the ebb and flow of gold seekers, some bound for the mountains and others headed for home, was capped by contradictions in the eastern press about the validity of the gold rush itself. Each time the journalists decided there was nothing to it, as shown by the eastward retreat of disgruntled argonauts, reports of new finds in the mountains would rise to plague them. Overnight the mad hunt would be renewed, and fresh heroes would emerge.

For example, there was the success story of a young Missourian named George A. Jackson, who after mining in California, had returned to the Fort Laramie region during the summer of 1858. Hearing about the activity along Cherry Creek, he moved southward through the mountains, sampling the gravel in various creeks along the way. In January 1859 he found encouraging pay dirt in Chicago Creek, not far from modern Idaho Springs. When the weather warmed, Jackson and some others began a serious probing of the find; as word spread that the results looked promising, a minor rush took place. Almost overnight some two hundred men were busy at the new Jackson Diggings. About the same time, word circulated among the miners that there was "color" at a place called Gold Run on Boulder Creek, as well as at Deadwood Gulch on South Boulder Creek. The latter camp was considered "five-dollar diggings"; within a few months, three hundred men were at work there.

About the time the excitement subsided and these camps settled down to routine extraction, a new find attracted wide attention. And just in time. Hundreds of hopefuls who had stayed on despite discouragements were on the verge of joining the "go-backer" movement. The mining country's reputation was balanced on a knife's edge, and only a piece of singularly good news would save it from possible failure.

The happy tidings came from a discovery along Clear Creek made by Georgia miner John H. Gregory. He had crossed the plains from Leavenworth in the summer of 1858, and like George Jackson, spent the winter at Fort Laramie. There he heard reports of gold in the South Platte country, and he, too, began prospecting mountain streams to the south. Along Clear Creek, Gregory fell in with some other miners, and the group worked its way into the mountains, sampling creek gravel along the way. On May 6 they made their big strike, and the dazed Gregory muttered, "My wife will be a lady and my children will be educated." The district that grew out of this find ultimately produced eighty-five million dollars worth of gold, but like many a prospector, the original discoverer died a poor man.

Less than a month after Gregory's strike, Green Russell and his brothers, who had gone back to Georgia and returned with equipment and 170 men, made yet another rich find, this time only about two miles southwest of Gregory Gulch. In a week, six of the men extracted seventy-six ounces of gold worth between $16 and $18 per ounce in coin, depending upon its purity.

CULVER PICTURES

GREGORY GOLD DIGGINGS

Word of these new strikes sowed more confusion on the high plains and in the river outfitting towns. Some young men who had just returned sold the remnants of their belongings for what they could get; and others, just arrived and not yet discouraged, bought them from middlemen for high prices. A newspaper correspondent at Lawrence, Kansas, bitterly criticized the "sharpers," as he called these enterprising souls who lurked about the towns, ever ready to capitalize on the latest rumors or even concoct tales of their own to drive prices down so they might buy.

Desperately, those who had a stake in the great promotion sought additional means of convincing the public that the gold rush was not just another swindle. Missouri River Valley merchants, of course, were interested in the continuation of the trade that had resulted from the spring migration, but the business and professional men who had gone out hoping to become part of a new western community were even more anxious that its birth be legitimized. Presumably the best way to accomplish this was to obtain an unbiased opinion from someone with a reputation for unimpeachable credibility.

By a happy circumstance, not just one but three such witnesses were on their way west, and all of them published accounts of what they saw. Henry Villard, a German journalist who later would come to fame in the West for his Northern Pacific Railroad, represented the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*. Albert D. Richardson, a well-known Massachusetts journalist, and Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, completed the trio. After looking at the "diggin's" in the spring of 1859, Richardson and Greeley wrote a joint report that was printed in the *Rocky Mountain News* on June 11. In straightforward language they reported what they had seen, admitting that fairly substantial amounts of gold were coming out of the new Gregory diggings but stating that they knew of no other major strikes in the region. They did not say that gold was lying around loose, waiting for someone to harvest it. On the contrary, they stressed that gold mining was a serious business requiring both knowledge and capital, and they decried the fact that thousands had stampeded westward under the illusion that they would get rich quickly with little effort. In his volume *Overland Journey*, Greeley pointed out that this mining region was far from any navigable waters or cheap means of transportation; that it was isolated by an arid country necessitating the importation of most foodstuffs; that the high altitudes would probably mean heavy winters and a short mining season; and finally, that the Pikes Peak gold was so dispersed that it would be hard to wash profitably, necessitating quartz-mining equipment for successful extraction.

The reports of the three journalists satisfied no one. Hardly had they left before Greeley, in particular, was accused of having been fooled. It was said that the scholarly-looking, bewhiskered scribe, dressed in a linen duster and limping from a sore leg acquired on his stagecoach trip west, had peered through rimless glasses at whatever the mountain men had shown him. According to one account, Greeley had been shown three times as much gold from the sluices than had ever been gathered before in an entire day's effort. It was said that gold that had been washed was injected into the soil ready for the next sluicing, and as the process was repeated, some astonishing results were obtained. Ovando Hollister, who published his *Mines of Colorado* a few years later, denied that the Greeley party had been "salted." But the *Tribune*'s crosstown rival, the *New York Times*, chose to think otherwise. It warned eastern readers that the writings of the victimized Greeley would cause much suffering, break up many a happy home, create numerous widows and orphans, and fill the poorhouses to overflowing.

To counter some of the unfavorable eastern talk, the stripling *Rocky Mountain News* explained that the spring rush had been made up principally of reckless adventurers who had struck off across the plains without any kind of preparation or talent for mining. Editor William Byers, therefore, was not in the least surprised that after just a few days a good many of them had started for home. A New York paper remarked that the little sheet out in the Rockies certainly carried a lot of mining news, and all of it was extremely favorable.

On the theory that the *Rocky Mountain News* might not as yet have a national readership, those interested in Denver's future tried another avenue of approach; they attempted to plant some good news in the Mississippi Valley newspapers. For example, soon after Sam Hawken, the famous gunsmith from Saint Louis, arrived in the mining country, his favorable account of the mines was hurried back to his hometown. Hawken admitted that while he had met a few "go-backers" along the way, he had seen no suffering on the trail, and the Indians he met were quite harmless. Since he had lived in Saint Louis for thirty-seven years and was well known there, his assurance that Pikes Peak gold was no humbug carried some weight.

Young Denver's propaganda efforts were not entirely convincing. Returnees shouted "liar" and "humbug" a great deal, and their complaints continued to appear in the eastern press. So did accounts of other problems in the Rockies. After

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RELICS OF A WILDERNESS INTERLUDE

BY SID & MARGE STALL

IN THE RUGGED COUNTRY of south central Colorado is a wilderness region of over five hundred square miles that has no paved roads, no gas stations, and few human inhabitants. Loosely designated as the eastern San Juan, this area of deep gorges and towering mountains has three peaks over fourteen thousand feet high, a hundred miles of clear mountain streams, and a quarter of a million acres of pine, fir, spruce, and aspen forest lands.

Though it is now virtually uninhabited, the region was the scene of frenetic prospecting and mining activity just a century ago. At that time a dozen major settlements in the area had a population of about 8,500 inhabitants; scattered cabins and temporary camps probably accounted for at least that many more.

It all began in 1861 when a pioneer prospector, Charles Baker, located a small amount of gold in the vicinity of present-day Silverton, bordering the eastern San Juan. Responding more to rumor than fact, eager prospectors followed Baker to the area. When they found little gold, the disgruntled miners actually put Baker on trial, and only by successfully panning some gold on the spot did Baker manage to win acquittal. At this point the Civil War interrupted Baker's prospecting activities, but in 1868 he returned to continue his determined search for a golden bonanza, only to be killed that same year by Indians who feared and resented intrusions into their territory.

Three years later, in 1871, one of the first important strikes in the eastern San Juan was made when J. K. Mullen and Henry Henson found a rich vein of gold and silver ore just west of the future mining settlement of Lake City.

At that time the Ute Indians held most of the San Juan and, in fact, much of Colorado's western slope. But in 1873 a revised treaty deprived the Utes of their San Juan territory and opened the gates to a small but eager army of fortune seekers. The riches of the region never equaled those of Central City or Leadville, but for nearly two decades a number of high-paying claims produced a significant flow of mineral wealth. Among the top producers were mines with such names as Polar Star, Legal Tender, Smile of Fortune, Tobasco, Yellow Medicine, Maid of Carson, Cracker Jack, and High Muck-a-Muck.

Every promising new strike quickly attracted a crowd and spawned the inevitable mining camp that seemingly materialized out of thin air. A typical camp consisted of several dozen tents and a few temporary shacks. If the strike fizzled the settlement vanished as quickly as it had appeared. But if a camp was located near what proved to be a rich deposit, it soon underwent a

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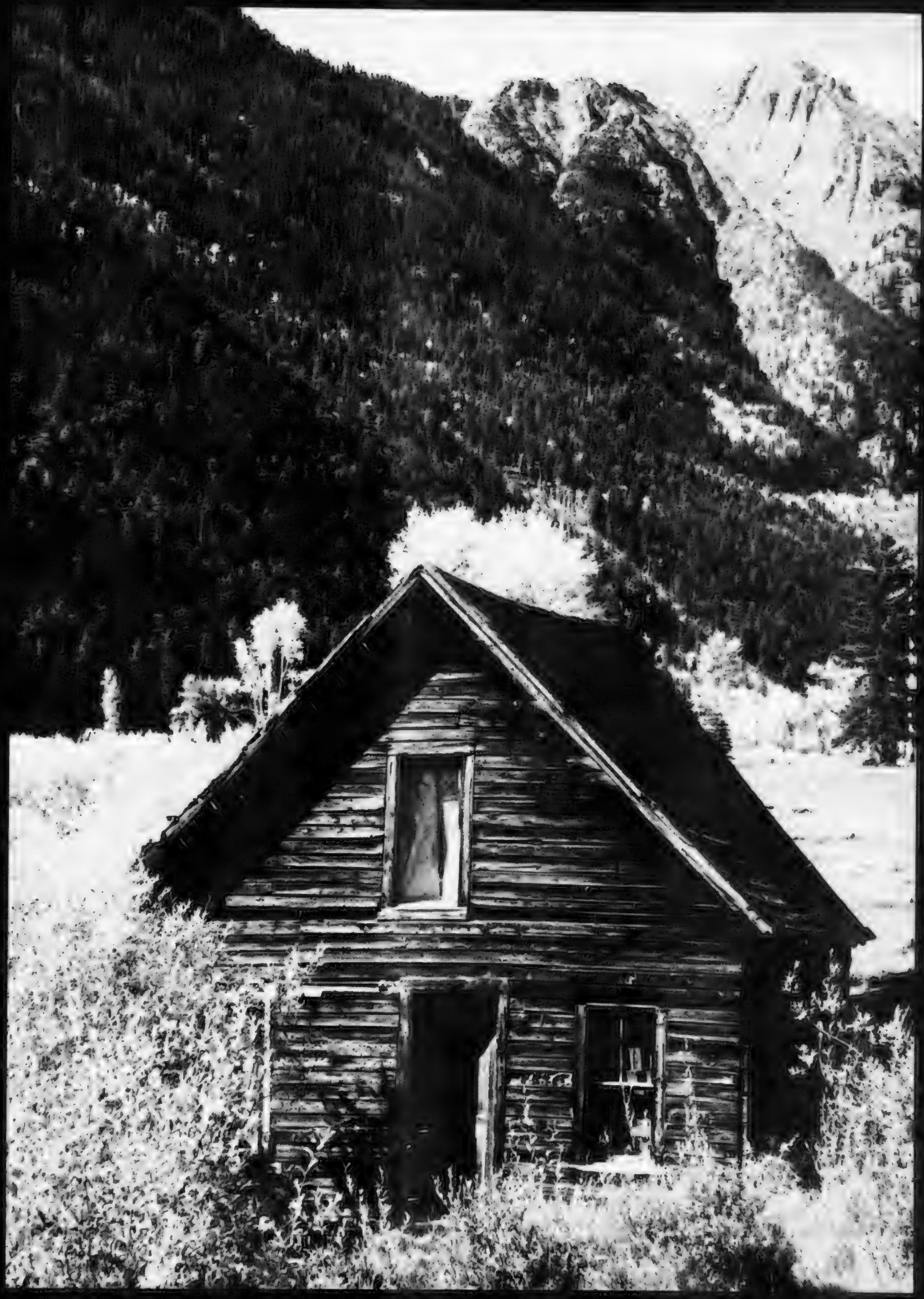
Opposite: This lonesome cabin near the now-vanished San Juan mining town of Sherman has survived many harsh mountain winters. During the settlement's heyday, its citizens built a dam to contain the floodwaters of the Cottonwood and Lake Fork creeks; ironically, near the turn of the century the dam broke and swept most of the town away.

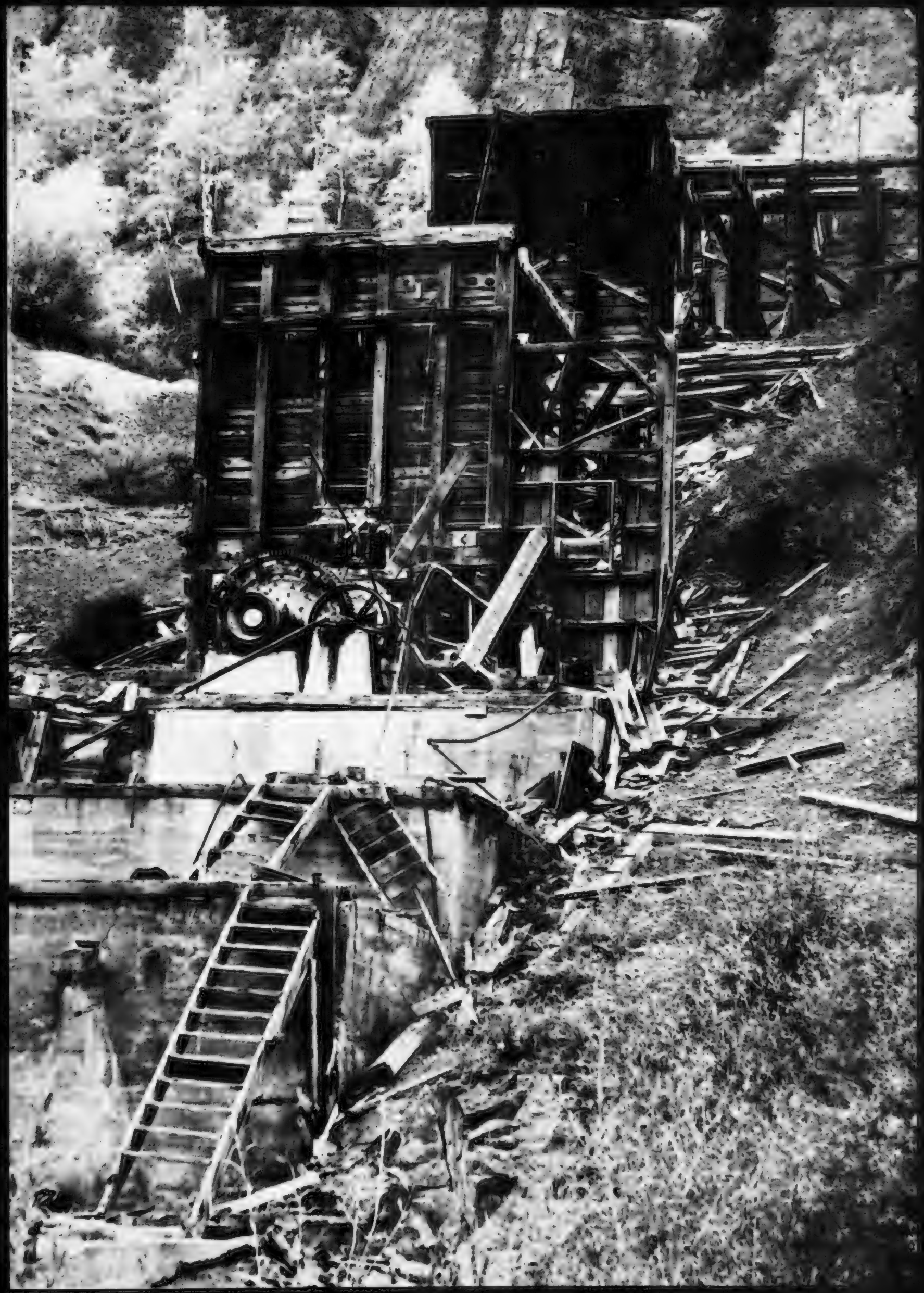


Nearly a century ago, Rose's Cabin was a stage station and the center of freewheeling social life in the eastern San Juan. The hotel burned years ago, and the original cabin surrendered to the winds and snow some time prior to 1962. Today only the walls of the stable mark the location of the once-bustling stage stop.

This unusual mine-related building still defies the elements near 12,800-foot Engineer Pass. The real estate sign is apparently the work of a wilderness humorist.

Only this cabin and one dilapidated shed still stand on the elaborately platted townsite of Capital City, once called Galena City. Ambitious city father George T. Lee renamed the town with every intention of seeing it outgrow Denver and of moving the seat of government to the San Juan. With the governorship in mind, Lee built a grand, two-story Victorian brick mansion that would do justice to the prestige of his yet-to-be-acquired office, but Lee's dreams were never realized. By 1958 his manor was on the verge of collapse, and in the summer of 1974 only fragments of brick remained.

Remains of an ore reduction mill stand at the Ute-Ulay mine near Henson and the site of the first significant San Juan strike. Ute-Ulay was the scene of labor strife in 1899, which was settled when Colorado Governor Charles Thomas dispatched troops. An international incident was almost provoked when Italian Consul Cuneo, attired in full diplomatic dress, intervened during a raging blizzard to prevent bloodshed.



The builder of this unusual stone house suffered no lack of materials. The lonely structure guards the skyline just east of Engineer Pass in a mining area called American Flats, within view of some of the most spectacular scenery in Colorado.

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profound change in character. First, much serious deliberation produced a name for the future town. The second step involved drafting an elaborate and optimistic town plat. The third phase was the construction of semipermanent buildings using the most readily available materials: usually logs, sometimes sawn lumber or stone. Construction was crude by most standards, but amazingly, a number of these early buildings still stand today, having survived the violent assaults of wind and snow for seventy years or more.

Towns that attained a decade of permanence could usually boast an ore-reduction mill, smelter, or sawmill, in addition to the usual stores, saloons, and cafes.

In the eastern San Juan, Capital City was one of the most vigorous and ambitious of the early mining settlements. The town's driving force was George T. Lee, who built two smelters, a sawmill, and a brick mansion. Both the mansion and the city's name reflected Lee's ambition to transfer Colorado's young government to what he felt was its rightful place in the San Juans. Lee's dream burst, however, when prolonged litigation halted mine production in 1880. The town's never-large population of eight hundred dwindled to nearly nothing by the turn of the century.

Another semipermanent town in the area was Henson, probably the most violent of the San Juan camps. With a population of a few hundred at most, Henson was rumored to have enough shootings and accidents to keep a corps of eight doctors busy day and night.

The highest of the mining camps was Carson, which sat astride the Continental Divide at the fantastic elevation of twelve thousand feet. Viewing its remains perched precariously atop the sharp divide ridge, one can easily imagine the western half sliding down the steep Pacific slope and the eastern counterpart slipping toward the Atlantic. Only the rich ores of the Saint Jacobs, the Maid of Carson, and other mines could have justified the nearly impossible location of the town.

The wettest of the camps was once-prosperous Sherman. Located in a valley at the confluence of two mountain streams, the town suffered frequent flooding. Local citizens built a sizeable dam to control the runoff, but, ironically, the structure collapsed and the resulting flood swept most of the town away. Sherman was never rebuilt, but a part of one building still stood in the fall of 1974.

The "driest" town was probably Engineer City, located on American Flats, just below Engineer Pass. With a population of four hundred busy miners in 1875, the town was reputedly the largest in Colorado without a single saloon.

Burrows Park was a string-of-beads settlement stretching along the upper Lake Fork in one of the loveliest alpine valleys in Colorado. Strung out along the valley floor for perhaps two miles, Burrows Park was more an informal collection of individual cabins than a well-defined town. Over one hundred scattered claims supported this loosely knit community.

One important San Juan landmark was Rose's Cabin. Though it was never actually a town, it soon became much more than just the cabin a man named Corydon Rose built in 1874. Located between Lake City and Silverton, the place served as a stage station on one of the only two roads through the eastern San Juan. The trip between the two towns was a forty-mile nightmare over a rough, narrow shelf road that climbed more than two thousand feet to cross the Animas-Gunnison Divide at Engineer Pass, 12,800 feet above sea level. Situated at the halfway point, Rose's Cabin was a welcome sight to weary travelers. Here the drivers replaced their exhausted six-horse teams, and they and the passengers fortified themselves for the second half of the precarious journey.

As the area developed, Rose's Cabin prospered and expanded. With a saloon, hotel, dance hall, and restaurant, it became the liveliest spot in the eastern San Juan. The place was a nineteenth-century version of a Holiday Inn, service station, general store, and nightclub all rolled into one. When mining and travel diminished, so did the need for Rose's Cabin; the well-known wayside place was abandoned at about the turn of the century, and today nothing but the walls of the stable remain.

The beginning of the end for prospectors in the San Juan came in the late 1890s, after some twenty years of mining activity. Occasional mine closings had already given warning that the supply of rich ore was not unlimited, and by 1900 many of the once-outstanding producers no longer paid. Operations ceased altogether at the Polar Star in 1896 and at the Frank Hough in 1900. In 1901 the Champion closed, followed by the Maid of Carson in 1902.

And so it went. The human influx of the 1870s reversed itself as the miners and their families left this wild and lovely place to find a better livelihood. The claims and cabins and towns were abandoned to the forest and the elements. And today this rugged mountain region has become a wilderness once more.

Sid *and* **Marge Stall** *of Littleton, Colorado, are free-lance writer-photographers whose work reflects their interest in history.*

MARTHA MAXWELL'S PEACEABLE KINGDOM

by Floyd & Marion Rinhart

IN THE NOSTALGIC DAYS of 1876, when the United States was celebrating its one hundredth birthday, women took an active part in the festivities. A national showcase for women's achievements was created at the great United States Centennial Exhibition held from May until November in Philadelphia's picturesque Fairmont Park.

A handsome Woman's Pavilion was built on the grounds with funds raised largely through the efforts of the Women's Centennial Executive Committee. A unique contribution to the fair, the Pavilion was devoted to exhibits—inventions, arts and skills, and educational programs—created by women. The crowds visiting the building were particularly intrigued by the head of "Dreaming Iolanthe" carved in butter by a Mrs. Brooks of Arkansas.

But by far the most popular exhibit prepared by a woman was located in another part of the fair, in a corner of the Kansas and Colorado Building beside a sign that read "Woman's Work." There, in a simulated Rocky Mountain and plains landscape that almost reached the roof, were displayed dozens of wild animals and birds that Martha Maxwell of Boulder, Colorado, had shot and mounted herself. Acclaimed as the "Colorado huntress" by the newspapers of the day, Martha Maxwell was an independent-minded woman of the West who aimed her gun with her left eye and shot with the skill of an experienced hunter. For exhibition visitors from the increasingly urbanized East, her exhibit of western wildlife provided a fascinating glimpse into an unknown world:

"Down the rugged descent leaped a little stream of sparkling water, which expanded at its base into a tiny lake, edged with pebbles and fringed, as was the brook-side, with growing grass and fern. The water and the banks which confined it were peopled by aquatic creatures: fish swimming in the lake, turtles sunning themselves on its half-submerged rocks, while beavers, muskrats, and water-fowl seemed at home upon the margin. Between the cascade and lakelet appeared the irregular vine-fringed mouth of a cave, its dark moss-grown recesses soon lost from sight in shadowy gloom. Above it and upon the upper heights of the mountain side . . . were grouped those animals that frequent the Rocky Mountains: fierce bears, shy mountain sheep, savage mountain lions or pumas, and a multitude of smaller creatures, each in an attitude of lifelike action. On the limited space allowed to represent the plains that stretch eastward from that elevated chain were huge buffaloes, elk, antelope, and their native neighbors."

All day long crowds jostled and jammed against the railing surrounding Martha Maxwell's exhibit. Their curiosity about both the animal kingdom and its exhibitor seemed insatiable. When Martha Maxwell's sister volunteered to relieve her for an hour, the sister was bombarded with questions: "Did Mrs. Maxwell kill all these animals?" "Did she kill them buf'lo?" "I don't believe them critters was shot; I've looked 'em all over and I can't see any holes." "Did she [poison] 'em?" "Does she live in that cave?" "Is she an Indian?" "If she's married, why ain't it called Mr. Maxwell's collection?"

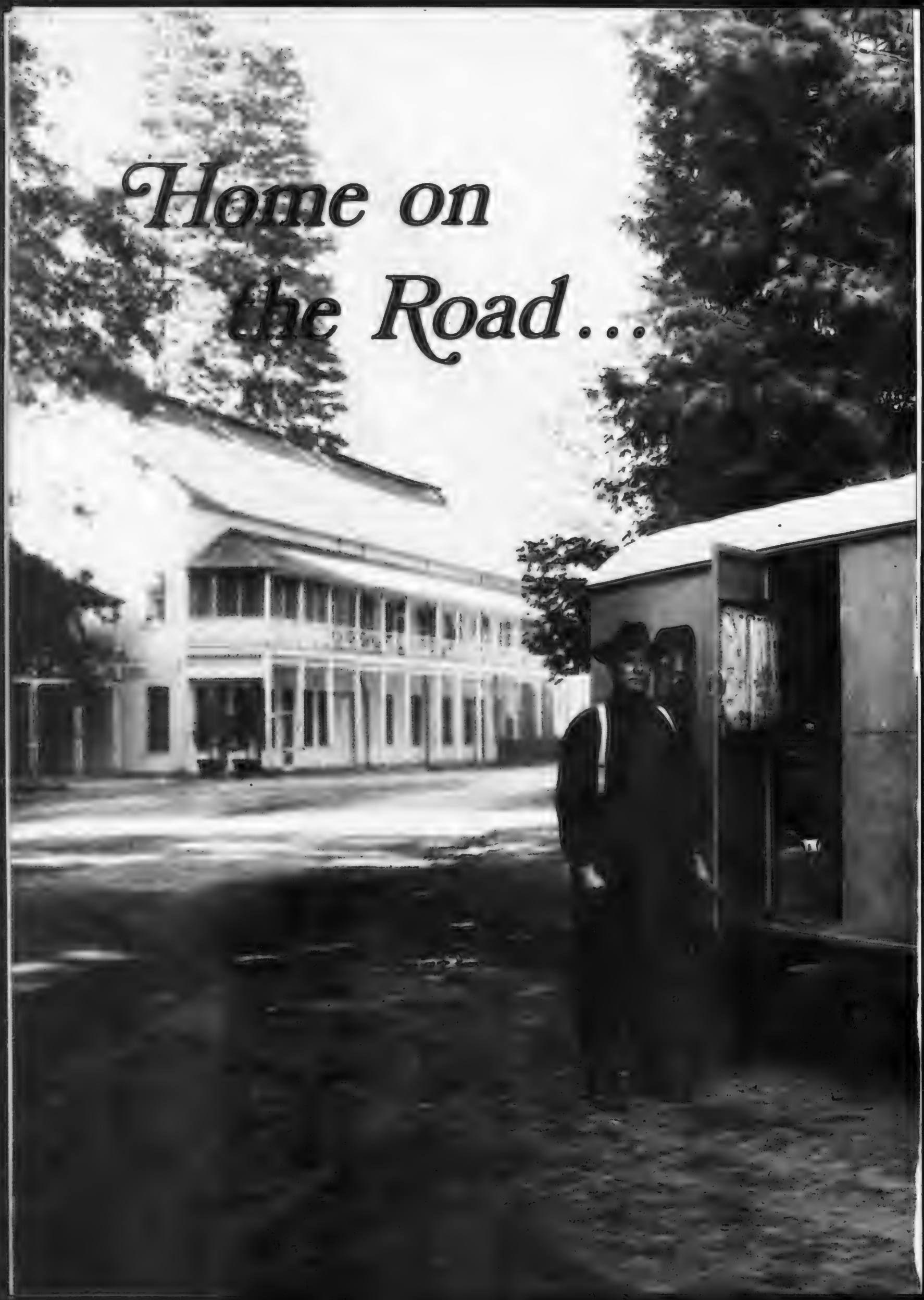
MARTHA MAXWELL, naturalist, taxidermist, hunter, and artist, was a tiny feminine woman just four feet, eleven inches tall and "as shy as one of her own weasels." Her interest in animal life began early in her childhood when she roamed the woods near her Pennsylvania home with her grandmother, an ardent nature lover. When she was four her father died. A few years later her mother remarried, and the family moved to Wisconsin.

It was in Wisconsin that Martha fired her first shot. One day when she was only ten years old, she saw a rattlesnake poised to strike her four-year-old sister as she played in an

Continued on page 62

COURTESY MRS. GEORGE B. BINHART

Martha Maxwell, the "Colorado huntress," poses with a magnificent rifle, "elegantly mounted and appropriately inscribed," that was presented to her by grateful fellow citizens at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.


Home on
the Road...

...Early Recreational Vehicles

by
T. H. Watkins

HOME-BUILT VAN IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, 1923
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

In 1924, my grandfather decided to leave Minnesota for Southern California, where it was warm and where the possibilities glowed like Sunkist oranges. He purchased a substantial tent trailer (similar to the one pictured on page 42); packed wife, baby daughter, and worldly goods into his Willys-Overland; and headed west. After weeks of overnight stays in widely scattered campgrounds where the amenities were either primitive or nonexistent; of roads that disappeared into the desert sand; of bogs that trapped the Willys and its tagalong trailer until horses or mules had to drag them out; of ruts and potholes that snapped springs and axles and rocks that lacerated tires; of indecipherable maps and well-meaning people who pointed the travelers in the wrong direction—after all this, the little family finally lurched into Los Angeles. Along the way, however, they had seen Yellowstone Park and the Grand Canyon, watched sunsets spilling across the desert sky, drunk from a lyrical mountain spring, and talked to Indians, cowboys, miners, and outdoorsmen. For the rest of his life, my grandfather would remember the trip with a kind of mixed nostalgia: one part of him shuddered at what he had gone through; another part was entranced with the adventure it had brought him.

Almost precisely fifty years later, I camped in a little park on the northern California coast and was greeted one afternoon by the sight of a gleaming motor home pulling into the campsite next to mine. It was some thirty feet from stem to stern, perhaps ten feet at the beam, and a pair of Yamaha trail bikes were appended to its back end. A family of four popped out of it, and soon its umbilical cords were plugged into available water and electricity, and a small cabana erected, complete with aluminum patio furniture. Shortly afterward, the teen-aged boy and girl took off on the trail bikes. For most of the afternoon, the sound of Mantovani oozed from the motor home's stereo, but when the teen-agers returned it was replaced by more contemporary material. In the evening the father barbecued hamburgers on the rollaway grill, and after dinner the mother and daughter cleared the table, taking the dishes into the kitchen of the motor home and doing them there. Later the whole family gathered around the portable television set under the cabana, the set's blue-white glow lighting their contented faces. Here was *home,* begod; let not bears and tigers intrude.

Half a century lay between my grandfather's feeble attempts to domesticate the wilderness with his tent trailer and Willys-Overland and the apparently total victory demonstrated by this sleek triumph of modern mass-production technology. Like the motor-home family, my grandfather back in 1924 was solidly middle-class, but in his time only the very rich could afford to cruise around the West in anything that approached such luxury—even if any such thing as a motor home had been commercially produced. My grandfather and his contemporaries had to buy what little was available along those lines or contrive their own.

A nineteenth-century observer once remarked, "The Amer-

PRECEDING TWO PAGES: R. E. JEFFERY'S HANDCRAFTED MOTOR HOME, BUILT ON THE CHASSIS OF A 1905 PIERCE ARROW, WAS PHOTOGRAPHED IN YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IN 1921.
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

icans are a wonderfully inventive people." As most of the photographs on these pages illustrate, in the first three decades or so of this century, Americans came up with some of the most splendid contraptions that ever rattled and wheezed and gasped over the rocks and ruts of the West. They called it "touring."

What most of them must have realized with a certain satisfaction was that they were pioneers in the first great age of the motorized, middle-class recreational vehicle—for virtually every one of the vehicles in the photographs on these pages, however crude, has its modern counterpart in an industry that grew like a four-wheeled Topsy. Up until 1929, for example, the manufacture of house trailers was an industry that did not even exist. But even as Francis H. Buzzacott turned the ignition key of his splendiferous custom-made motor home in that year (see page 47), the first mass-produced house trailer was trundling off the assembly line of the Covered Wagon Company of Mount Clemens, Michigan. By the end of the 1930s, the company was turning out more than 20,000 a year—and by then it was only one of approximately three hundred similar companies, large and small. The house-trailer boom revived after the war, although up until the mid-1950s most were actually *used* as houses in order to relieve the desperate housing shortage. But with the galloping prosperity of the late 1950s, the trailer as a recreational vehicle really came into its own, and by 1965 it had been joined by the truck camper and motor home in all their variety. (In keeping with today's recreational vehicle terminology—and to avoid confusion with the much larger, semi-fixed dwellings known as "mobile homes"—we should, to be precise, be referring to house trailers as "travel trailers" and to tent trailers and their collapsible variants as "camping trailers.") In 1973, the industry's peak year, 752,000 units of all kinds were manufactured, with a retail value of nearly $2.5 billion. The next year, jarred by the general nationwide economic decline and rising gasoline prices (and gasoline shortages), "RV" sales took a nosedive, but by mid-1976 the demand was once again nearly equalling production capacity, and the future of the industry appeared rosy indeed.

So THE INDIVIDUAL INGENUITY of one generation was translated by the next into a consumer-marketing success story. The vehicle of the new age is light years removed in sophistication and comfort from those of the first generation, but one is tempted to wonder whether something wasn't lost along the way. The motor-home family I encountered in 1974 would never suffer sand in their sandwiches or rocks in their sleeping bags; they would rarely be lost or done in by bad roads that dribbled away to nothing, since they traveled the most extensively developed highway system in the world; they would never be without heat, water, or light; nor would they ever be forced to stumble out in the middle of the night to do the necessary behind a bush, as my grandfather had to do on more than one occasion in 1924. And yet, containerized and sanitized, would they ever experience what my grandfather experienced at four o'clock of a bitter-cold desert morning? Standing there, he said, staring up with wonder and terror at the awesome scatter of stars, he was sure he could feel the earth moving, rotating, speeding through that incredible void; he never felt anything like it again.

And now, are we coming full circle? One indication that the circle is closing, in a small way at least, is demonstrated by a young friend of mine. Two years ago she purchased a tiny, bubble-shaped delivery truck of uncertain vintage; rebuilt its engine; painted it a bright blue with appropriate ornamentation; tore out the interior and built therein a small home, including a carpeted floor and a patchwork ceiling, cupboards, a small sink, a little potbellied stove, and padded seats with a rainbow of pillows—a miniature apartment perhaps seven feet to a side and six high. For days and sometimes weeks, she disappears into the countryside in her little mobile environment. And there are thousands of ingenious people like her all over the West these days, their creations bearing an unmistakable family resemblance to those of fifty years ago. It is not a particularly comfortable life, my young friend reports, but comfort and convenience are not what is involved. What is involved is a kind of freedom, a sense of the unexpected lying around every turn of a little back road; there is adventure here and, above all, an inescapable connection with the land itself, a kinship that enlarges the soul.

I'm not certain that the modern motor-home family I camped next to would understand that. But I think my grandfather would—and so would the people of his time, the people on these pages.

T.H. Watkins, *a former editor of this magazine, is the author of numerous articles and books on the West. He has recently become a member of the board of editors of* American Heritage *magazine.*

DINNER TIME IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN LAKE PARK, DENVER, 1919
WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT, DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Spartan Beginnings

The bare bones of early motor-touring outfits consisted of a tent or two, and the automobile sometimes became a part of the house, as shown below at Rocky Mountain Lake Park, an autocamp established by the city of Denver in about 1915 to attract vacationers. At right is an example of car as cupboard. The young man stoicly enduring an after-breakfast scrub has probably been partaking of the package of Kellogg's Corn Flakes visible in the running-board cabinet. Old Kellogg himself was no stranger to the touring scene; *see page 47.*

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WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT, DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT, DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

FORD ARCHIVES, HENRY FORD MUSEUM, DEARBORN

It was not long before red-blooded American ingenuity began to be applied to the needs of the touring scene. Above we see an ancestral version of the truck camper, photographed at Rocky Mountain Lake Park in 1919. (The same camper also appears on page 39.) The owner seems to have thought the project through carefully, right down to a storage box on the running board and a singularly clever sliding tail gate for cooking and stowage. As proof that loving-hands-at-home construction could have a certain cleanness of line, regard the Model-T mini-motorhome from Brownsville, Texas, at left. One can't help but wonder how it handled in a strong breeze.

NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY COLLECTION, DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Birth of an Industry

Above: An elegant publicity shot for the Warner Prairie Schooner Auto Trailer, circa late 1920s. The company's brochures declared that it was a marvel of ease to set up and break down, but my grandfather wrestled with a similar tent trailer clear across the continent in 1924 and maintained that it was a device got up by sadists for the torture of adult males. For tourists seeking comfort on the road with a minimum of fuss, an Oregon inventor devised the Callahan Auto Bed, demonstrated for us at right in its operational and traveling modes.

OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BOTH PHOTOGRAPHS NATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE HISTORY COLLECTION DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Principles of the telescope revealed: The sleek Automobile Touring Apartment shown below and in the detail at left was invented and manufactured by Gustav de Bretteville of the San Francisco de Brettevilles. In addition to holding a suitcase, the telescoping cabinet on the left side contained such conveniences as an electric light, a two-burner stove, and an ironing board. The camper could sleep two very close friends. We don't know how many of these curiosities were actually "manufactured" but suspect that this model was the only one the world ever saw.

Motor Parks

At right, the entrance to Overland Park, an autocamp established by the city of Denver in 1922 and one of the best such in the country at the time. It not only welcomed the motorized camper, but invited him, featuring 160 acres of campsites and a three-story clubhouse that offered dancing, dining, inside plumbing, and a soda fountain. It was not always thus, particularly for those hauling trailers. As late as 1937, Charles Edgar Nash in Trailer Ahoy! *declared in righteous indignation that "trailers are here to stay and no amount of prejudice or ill-advised opposition on the part of individuals or communities with other interests at heart, can really stay their progress. [Trailerites] are not gasoline gypsies or drifters . . . but substantial citizens, and the sooner their rights are observed, the better." Nash may not have thought of himself as a gypsy, but the "trailerite" who put together the delightful gypsy wagon below certainly did. The date is 1922. The place is Rocky Mountain Lake Park. The object on the side of the thing is not a mirror, but a landscape painting—artwork that today's multitude of van owners might well envy.*

BOTH PAGES WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT, DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Wretched excess: There is such a thing as carrying a good idea so far that it becomes a bad idea—as demonstrated by the motor homes on this page, both photographed at Denver's Overland Park. Above we find a motorized box with an addition reminiscent of a Pullman observation platform, circa 1921. At left is a four-wheeled bungalow of the same vintage; the driver sat on the "front porch" and extended a genuine carpentered hand when signaling turns. Despite its limited size this motor home also had a wood-burning stove, and one can only hope that the owner was not inside when the thing inevitably went up in flames. Such inspired creations would be banned from the road today, for good and sufficient reasons.

All the Comforts of Home

Moving up into the heavyweight category, we come to the functional if somewhat boxy vehicle at right, built by Wallace Becker of La Moille, Illinois, for a trip to the Pacific Northwest in 1924. For the story of the Becker family's adventures, turn to page 49. The handsome and sturdy motor home in the center photograph was photographed with its proud owners in Yellowstone National Park in 1925. When it comes to downright elegance, the Ohio-built creation in the bottom picture, also dating from the mid-1920s, boasts an array of chrome fittings, stained-glass windows, and tassel-hung curtains that would delight any Winnebago owner of the present generation.

COLLECTION OF VICTORIA M. BECKER

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FAMILY MOTOR COACHING MAGAZINE

If ordinary citizens did what they could, the rich did what they wanted. Below we see the motor home built to the specifications of Francis H. Buzzacott in 1929. Buzzacott billed himself as a traveler, explorer, soldier, and big-game hunter. His name is lost to most of us today, but he was apparently famous enough in his own time to build this splendid beast on a Rio chassis, complete with gas stove, refrigerator, shower, and radio. W. K. Kellogg, of the corn flakes Kelloggs, went a step further than Buzzacott. Several steps. His "Ark," shown above, was built in the mid-1920s. It weighed 11,000 pounds and its appointments included a long-distance Super-Heterodyne radio, a shower, a hot-water tank, a Calmet electric stove and a two-burner oil stove, central heating, lavatory and toilet, a telephone from the interior of the car to the chauffeur's compartment, electric fans, and a sixteen-foot folding boat. After releasing this information to an inquisitive public, Kellogg added, "When tired of making Kellogg's Corn Flakes I find the 'Ark' an incentive to rest."

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One Era Ends; Another Begins

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By the middle of the 1930s, the age of the handmade house-on-wheels was in its decline, not to be revived until the 1970s. Mobile-home making was now an industry, and a growing one. Some of the more ambitious trailers of the period achieved an almost classic elegance, such as the 1937 Curtis Aerocar in the top photograph. Somewhat less flashy, but equipped with all the appointments a Hollywood starlet might wish, was the 1936 Halsco Land Yacht of Ida Lupino seen directly above; the actress herself is in the doorway. Trailers enjoyed quite a vogue in filmland for a time, and one of their most passionate devotees was W. C. Fields, who, rumor has it, used his to travel to his many savings accounts. More reliable evidence suggests that he kept his trailer well-supplied in emergency rations, most of them liquid in form. Hollywood lived—and so did an industry brought into the world by the wedding of wheels to houses in the West.

Crossing the West by Motor Home - in 1924

by Darlene Byrne

HALF A CENTURY AGO my father, Wallace Becker, a farmer in La Moille, Illinois, took the advice of Horace Greeley to "Go west, young man, go west." He and my mother, who were both in their early twenties, had heard glowing reports from relatives about the opportunities opening up in the great Pacific Northwest. So in 1924 he built self-contained living quarters on the frame of a new Samson truck—today we would call the result a "motor home"—and they started out to seek their fortune. Gerald, my brother, who was then just three years old, and Pansy, the family's white Spitz puppy, made the long trek with them across the country to Seattle.

My father had bought the truck especially to convert for this trip. There was no model to guide him, and at that time he had no special knowledge of carpentry. But he possessed an inventive German mind, and with meticulous care he outfitted it with all the necessities for living and sustained travel. Two of his young brothers-in-law, Al and Leonard Kuczynski, helped him build it.

It is surprising today to find in modern recreational vehicles many of the same comforts my father incorporated in this early home on wheels. It featured a built-in double bed for my parents and a small cot for my brother, these being arranged bunk-style to conserve space. It also had a fold-down table with upholstered bench seats permanently attached to the floor. Mother and Gerald sat on these when traveling. The driver's seat was also upholstered —the equivalent of today's bucket seat. But it was unique in that it lifted off to reveal a built-in toilet. The motor home also had built-in wardrobes and dish and food cupboards. A rug covered the floor, and the windows and door sported beautiful scalloped cloth shades.

During their journey Mother and Father often stopped along the side of the road under shade trees or parked down by a lake or river. Wherever they stopped they had electric lights, because they carried their own power plant on board. If they happened on an auto-camp (cabins then rented for $1 a night!) they would pull in for fresh water, showers, and a visit with other travelers.

When they stopped in a town or park, a crowd would quickly gather, not only to see the strange house on wheels but also to hear the wondrous talking machine, a Murad radio with a built-in speaker over the table. My folks would open the door and windows so people could gather around to enjoy the programs. This proved quite a help in getting acquainted with farmers selling fresh dairy products, meat, fruit, and vegetables. There were no well-stocked supermarkets along those early highways! The motor home did have a little zinc-lined icebox, but ice was hard to get and the weather often very hot. When it turned chilly, they used a little wood stove for cooking and heating their cozy motor home. For cooking outdoors in warmer weather, Mother used a two-burner gas stove.

They had to cross the Rockies before there were good roads and guardrails—and before tranquilizers for my mother, who was terrified of heights! What's more, the mountains they had known back in Illinois were mere hills compared to these. When Mother took a look at the towering peaks to be crossed, she became violently sick.

The Samson proved a sturdy vehicle, though it could only make about thirty miles an hour on level ground due to the heavy load it was carrying. At times Father had to *back it down* mountain roads to a turnout to let other vehicles pass. In the plains they encountered *gumbo* which also slowed their progress. Mother describes this as a sort of muddy clay. Webster defines it as "a fine-ground silty soil of the western prairies, which becomes sticky when wet." The early auto and truck drivers called it an abomination!

My parents made many stops to visit assorted aunts, uncles, and cousins as they drove west. They joined in the wheat harvest in Minnesota, Montana, and eastern Washington—the arrival of a pair of healthy young farmers was a most welcome sight to their relatives, and they enjoyed hearing the latest news about the family back home. Visitors were few in those days, and people were hospitable to guests whether they had little or lots to share.

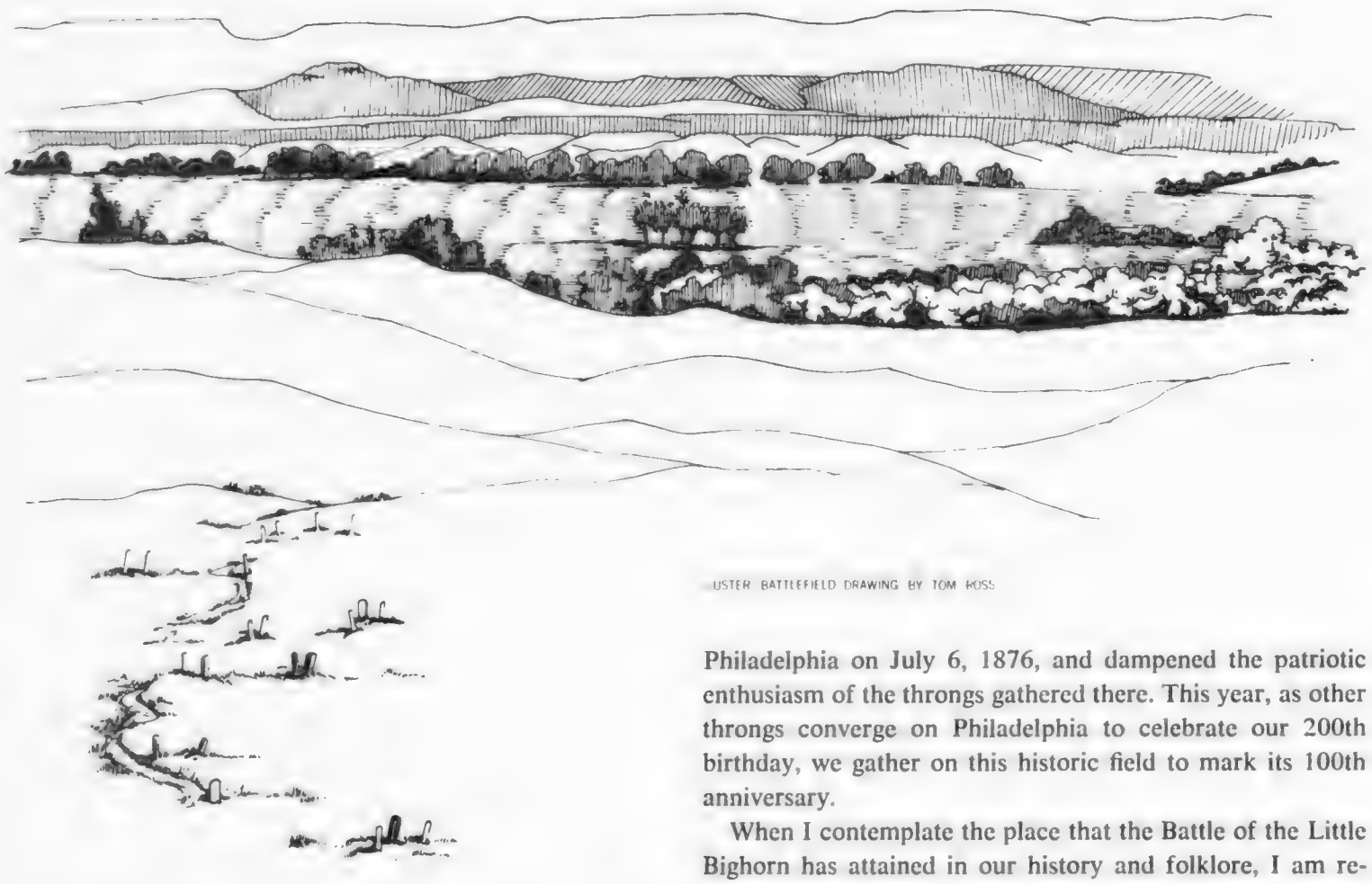
It was late springtime when my parents left Illinois and early fall by the time they finally arrived in Seattle. Every place of interest along the way had meant a stop, for this was a new and fascinating country to them both.

After settling in Edmonds, Washington, they continued to live in the motor home while building a house. The following summer they again took to the road for a leisurely vacation trip through western Washington. My mother now resides in Seattle, and after these many years she still cherishes the memories of these two adventure-filled summers of "touring."

Darlene Becker Byrne *lives in Seattle, Washington.*

A Matter of Opinion

At the Little Bighorn—One Hundred Years Later



USTER BATTLEFIELD DRAWING BY TOM ROSS

Robert M. Utley, historian with the U.S. Department of the Interior and a Custer authority, delivered a keynote address during June 25 ceremonies at the Custer Battlefield National Monument to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The following excerpts from Utley's speech gain a special relevance when it is known that his audience was surrounded by a large contingent of followers of Russell Means and the American Indian Movement, whose appearance was unscheduled but pertinent.

A CENTURY AGO, even as our forebears gathered in Philadelphia for that great exposition celebrating the 100th birthday of the United States, the twisted ridges and ravines of the Little Bighorn bore witness to one of the most dramatic, memorable, and almost instantly controversial episodes in the history of our nation. The news of the annihilation of the golden-maned boy general of Civil War fame and about 225 men of his command reached Philadelphia on July 6, 1876, and dampened the patriotic enthusiasm of the throngs gathered there. This year, as other throngs converge on Philadelphia to celebrate our 200th birthday, we gather on this historic field to mark its 100th anniversary.

When I contemplate the place that the Battle of the Little Bighorn has attained in our history and folklore, I am reminded of the remark of the French writer Anatole France: "From legends men draw all the ideas necessary to their existence. They do not need many, and a few simple fables will suffice to gild millions of lives." What a galaxy of fables has burst from the brief flare of violence that occurred on this battle ridge. How richly they have gilded millions of lives. Most of these fables are so demonstrably untrue or patently improbable as to be chiefly sources of amusement to all but the unthinking. Even though they distort or falsify history, perhaps they are not too harmful.

But when fables go beyond mere amusement they cease to be wholly harmless. When they contribute to stereotypes and symbolism that not only falsify history but actually help shape history, they invite critical examination. Historian and philosopher Will Durant touched on this phenomenon when he observed that "beliefs make history, especially when they are wrong; it is for errors that men have most nobly died." Some of the symbolism engendered by this battle and battle-

Continued on page 59

The Colorado Centennial: Three New Books

REVIEWED BY GEORGE DAVIS WILLIAMS

THREE INFORMATIVE and comprehensive books on Colorado have appeared just in time for the state's centennial celebrations.

Historian Carl Abbott, in his *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State,* tells how mining dominated the early history of Colorado, how towns like Central City rose and declined, and how the fortunes of men like Horace Tabor came and went.

Colorado: A History of the Centennial State by Carl Abbott *(Colorado Associated University, Boulder, 1976; 324 pp., intro., illus., maps, charts, biblio., appen., notes, index, $12.50).*

Colorado: A Bicentennial History by Marshall Sprague *(American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, and W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1976; 204 pp., illus., maps, index, $8.95).*

William Henry Jackson's Colorado compiled by William C. Jones and Elizabeth B. Jones *(Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, 1976; 172 pp., illus., $27.95).*

The book is also a tale of economic growth tied to ranching and beef cattle and to the development of agriculture, mainly in the San Luis Valley. It describes how entrepreneurs like David Moffat, John Evans, William Byers, and Jerome Chaffee assembled and controlled the capital, labor, political muscle, and expertise required to exploit the natural and industrial resources of Colorado. These men also created a conservative political environment that usually ignored the national scene.

Abbott also graphically describes industrial warfare in the early twentieth century between miners and businessmen, and the growth of the mile-high city, Denver. The latter quickly became a thriving metropolis of over one million people and the financial and commercial center of Colorado. But with growth came the problems of urbanization, which Denver, like most cities, has not effectively solved.

Emphasis is placed, too, on the use and misuse of the state's great natural resources. Attention is called to the environmentalists fighting a too rapid expansion of the oil-shale industry, to the failure of Coloradans to control the use and availability of water, and to other exploitations of land and minerals.

In *Colorado: A Bicentennial History,* Marshall Sprague concentrates upon the personalities who achieved statehood for Colorado, and who built the economic and political bases for more recent times. He offers fascinating and penetrating insights into how John Evans, William Gilpin, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Hart Benton, Jerome Chaffee, William Loveland, William Jackson Palmer, and others contributed to both the well-being and misfortunes of the Centennial State.

Like Abbott, Sprague also describes the roles played by mining, farming, ranching, railroads, tourism, industrial warfare, the Ku Klux Klan, and environmentalists as the state moved from infancy to vibrant maturity.

While Abbott only briefly discusses the roles of Spanish settlers and the Indians, Sprague offers keener insight into their contributions to the state. Abbott better describes and pinpoints the problems of minorities; Sprague offers more in-depth observations on the political climate in Colorado. Both authors correctly identify the rape of the mines and of farming by opportunistic Coloradans, and the environmental issues of more recent times.

The third book is a compilation prepared by William and Elizabeth Jones from black and white photographs taken mostly in the late nineteenth century by the famed photographer of the West, William Henry Jackson. It offers intense and interesting pictures of soaring peaks, deep canyons, and serene parks. There are also photographs of Colorado's first residents, the Indians, and of their cliff dwellings around Mesa Verde. Jackson's photography also does a remarkable job of depicting the expansion of the railroad, the discovery of gold and silver, and the growth of cities and towns.

What William Henry Jackson, who died at the age of ninety-nine, has captured on film is the colorful, lusty, and spectacular story of Colorado. His photographs provide a vivid accompaniment to the Abbott and Sprague histories of the Centennial State.

Editor's note: Other new books on Colorado (received too late to review in this issue) include *David Lavender's Colorado* by David Lavender (Doubleday); *The Coloradans* by Robert G. Athearn (University of New Mexico); *A Colorado History: Revised Centennial Edition* by Maxine Benson and Carl Ubbelohde (Pruett); and *Colorado on Glass* by Terry W. Mangan (Sundance).

George Davis Williams, *former teacher-administrator at the University of Denver, is an educational consultant for Columbia College.*

The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM P. MACKINNON

WITH HIS FIRST BOOK, James L. Haley has set out to provide what he believes to be the first comprehensive, objective account of the origins and prosecution of the Red River War of 1874–75. In brief, Haley argues that there were four basic factors that prompted an unusual alliance of Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos to leave their reservations for the warpath during June of 1874: hunger; rage; smuggling; and religious mysticism. What followed was a savage, grueling campaign of attrition that pitted Indians against the army in an arena encompassing Kansas, the Indian Territory, and the Staked Plains of Texas. The result was the final subjugation of at least three of the South Plains' principal tribes.

The Buffalo War: The History of the Red River Indian Uprising of 1874 by James L. Haley *(Doubleday, New York, 1976; 290 pp., illus., maps, biblio., notes, index, $7.95).*

Haley clearly holds the federal government and its executive agencies principally responsible for the outbreak of the war. For example, he attributes starvation on the reservations to the appalling inability of the Indian Bureau to provide the tribes with their treaty rations, a situation aggravated by the army's willful failure to prevent white poachers from illegally decimating the buffalo herds on tribal hunting grounds. Indian rage over this situation was, in turn, compounded by the army's refusal to deal effectively with the white thieves then preying on Indian pony herds. To this volatile scenario, Haley then adds an illegal flow of liquor and firearms to the reservations through traders who easily evaded both the army and the Indian agents.

The catalyst in the spring of 1874 was the Comanches' adoption of a mystical Sun Dance and the emergence among apolitical bands of a charismatic leader, the medicine man Isa-tai. Once whipped to a political and religious frenzy, the first major conflict came on

June 27, 1874, when a combined force of five hundred Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos from the Indian Territory fell upon Adobe Walls, a buffalo hunters' camp in the Texas Panhandle. The resulting battle was a bizarre standoff, with Bat Masterson supporting the hunters, while a Black army deserter rode with the Indians and directed their charges through bugle calls.

The army responded to the uprising with a massive infusion of troops under Lt. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, commander of the huge Military Division of the Missouri. Directing the action by telegraph from his Chicago headquarters, Sheridan ordered a strike force of six regiments organized into five independent columns to converge on Texas's Staked Plains from a variety of directions. His strategy, as it had been in 1868, was to force the enemy into surrender through unrelenting, year-round pressure, pursuit, and combat. Through a series of vicious engagements fought during the summer and fall of 1874 and a winter pursuit in weather so wet that the Indians referred to it as "the wrinkled-hand chase," Sheridan's commanders forced the tribes into surrender. The result was a return to the Indian Territory reservations and for an unlucky group of chiefs and warriors—some chosen arbitrarily at random—imprisonment in the dank dungeons of Fort Marion, Florida.

On balance, Haley, a student at the University of Texas at Austin, has done well what he set out to accomplish. He presents clearly the complex perspective and motivations of the Indians involved as well as the palpable animosity between the army commanders and the churchmen assigned as their Indian agents. The book fleshes out the relatively brief accounts of the Red River War found in William H. Leckie's 1967 volume, *The Buffalo Soldiers*, and Robert M. Utley's 1974 study, *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1890.*

On a broader scale, *The Buffalo War* also contributes to our understanding of the corrosive internal disputes that wracked the post-Civil War army as a small group of proud, competent, ambitious, and high-strung colonels—all former major generals of volunteers—maneuvered desperately for promotion.

If *The Buffalo War* has shortcomings, they probably take the form of a preface that is labored and self-conscious in style, and footnotes that in terms of organization and completeness do not do justice to a fine bibliography. The book also tends to treat the Red River War in isolation without relating it to the subsequent campaigns on the North Plains.

William P. MacKinnon *of Birmingham, Michigan, has written for this magazine as well as for the* Utah Historical Quarterly *and* History.

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Rio Grande and The Big Bend

REVIEWED BY PAT FAULKNER

THE RIO GRANDE was officially named a "wild river" by Congress in 1970 to preserve its untouched canyons—yet the river itself is heavily used for irrigation along its winding path to the Gulf of Mexico.

Rio Grande, photography by Robert Reynolds, text by Tony Hillerman *(Graphic Arts Center, Portland, Ore., 1975; 128 pp., illus., $25.00).*

The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier by Ronnie C. Tyler with a foreword by Mitchell A. Wilder *(National Park Service, Washington, D.C., 1975; 288 pp., illus., maps, biblio., notes, index, $5.10, paper,* from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington).

In *Rio Grande,* Tony Hillerman, an author noted for his skill at evoking the mood of the landscape, takes the reader on a 1,900-mile journey from the river's birthplace in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado to its mouth on the tropical Gulf of Mexico.

From its source the river dances over water-polished stones, forms cool, clear trout streams, ambles slow and serene through cottonwood bosques, and thunders down towering canyons where the rapids are dangerous even for experts. However, for all its many different natures, no river in the United States has watered an older civilization.

The scenes and seasons of the Rio Grande are captured in the cumulative effect of Robert Reynolds's photographs, presented in color in an impressive 13½-by-10-inch format. Reynolds, a renowned landscape photographer, invades the Rio Grande's mountain valleys and desert plains, preserving in 105 sparkling views the water, the land, and the majestic ruins of the Pueblo Indians who knew the river as *T'sina* or *Kanyapkwa,* the "great river." Although author and photographer worked separately, one cannot separate the narrative from the illustrations. Each is a mirror of the other, and together they blend into an exquisite work of art telling the story of a mighty river.

In *The Big Bend,* Ronnie C. Tyler provides a different approach to a related subject. Three-quarters of its way to the Gulf of Mexico, the Rio Grande jogs abruptly northward—thus providing the distinctive name for the remote southwest Texas region that it borders. Big Bend country is a vast land of towering peaks shrouded in purple haze, of great sweeps of desert splotched with patches of marigold, paperflower, Mesa Greggii blooms, and thorny chaparral. It is a land where only the strong could survive.

Tyler's book is a long-needed account of the human invasion of this rugged Texas desertland. Written to supply interpretive material for the Amon Carter Museum's 1975 exhibition on the Big Bend, it is a story of conflict between man and man, and between man and nature. It is a story of survival of the fittest, of outlaws, Texas Rangers, miners, ranchers, and most prominently of a land which could not be dominated.

The Big Bend combines a clear understanding of the area's physical features with a thoroughly researched account of its exploration and settlement through text, maps, sketches, and photographs. It is a journey that spans four hundred years, from the Spanish treasure-hunting expeditions of the 1500s up to the arrival of twentieth-century civilization. Substantial space is given in the book to ranchers, Indians, and cavalry officers, but missing from the account is adequate material on the "buffalo soldiers" who helped keep the Indians subdued. Although there is quite a lot of material on the camel experiment of the mid-1800s, "Hi Jolly," the well-known Arab who cared for the camels, is not mentioned.

Reading *The Big Bend* will make those of an adventurous spirit want to see this last frontier and will make those acquainted with it want to return to its solitude and majestic, rugged beauty.

Pat Faulkner *of Kerrville, Texas, is a journalist and photographer.*

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Git Along, Little Dogies: Songs and Songmakers of the American West by John I. White *(University of Illinois, Urbana, 1976; 221 pp., illus., appen., index, $10.00).*

REVIEWED BY KENNETH PERIMAN

JOHN I. WHITE has written with great authority on many excellent western songs and their makers. His love for his subject and his knowledge of the field make this work a must for every individual who has an interest in the West and its people.

From the foreword by Austin Fife to the discography at the end, *Git Along Little Dogies* should hold the interest of practically everyone. White has included memorable photographs and a host of human interest material illustrating the songs and their writers.

Articles are included on Romaine Lowdermilk, D. J. O'Malley, Owen Wister, Gail Gardner, and Carl Sprague, among others. (And along the way, the reader also finds out about John White, whose own career as a singer—he was known to radio listeners of the 1930s as the "Lonesome Cowboy"—has been outstanding. This reviewer first met John White in Denver at the International Folk Festival in 1966, where we read papers and swapped stories. It was a real joy to find out what he has been up to since.) The reader will also find many favorite western songs included, such as "Strawberry Roan," "Zebra Dun," "Great Grandad," "Home on the Range," and others.

White's book should be ranked with some of the most interesting in the area, including those by Lomax, Larkin, Lingenfelter, Dwyer, Cohen, Silber, Robinson, Ohrlin, and the Fifes. There are other good books on the subject, but the authors mentioned, along with White, are among the best.

The volume was difficult to put down and certainly a pleasure to review. Borrowing from the words of J. Frank Dobie and others, John White and *Git Along Little Dogies* will "do to tie to and ride the river with." Obviously, the book is highly recommended.

Kenneth Periman *teaches at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado.*

The Great American Frontier: A Story of Western Pioneering edited by Thomas D. Clark *(Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1975; 334 pp., intro., biblio., index, $5.95).*

REVIEWED BY PETER CARROLL

EVER SINCE 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner presented his famous frontier hypothesis, historians have been studying the impact of the western frontier upon American society. Today, amid dire warnings about the future of American expansion and the related problem of preserving the natural environment, these questions seem more compelling than ever.

Thomas Clark's book is partly a response to this contemporary concern. It is a collection of primary sources which tells the story of American frontier expansion in the words of the participants themselves, as extracted from their letters, journals, public records, newspapers, and travel accounts. Western historians and frontier buffs will find few surprises. Many of the sources —such as the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition—have been quoted extensively before, and Clark's introductory statements tend to repeat the conventional wisdom about the frontier experience. "The old frontier treaties," he writes, "failed because they were idealistic in concept, unrealistic in long-range application, and many times insincere."

But if Clark's organizing principles are traditional, his particular selections are often excellent. A letter from the Nebraska frontier in 1876, for example, provides an unusual insight into the daily life of a homesteading family, and a passage about vigilantes in Montana is especially effective.

Several documents place contemporary problems in historical perspective. The section on Indian-white relations illuminates American aggression against native peoples, and other pieces portray the destruction of the natural environment.

Despite its deficiencies, this book is a convenient compilation of the basic documents of our frontier heritage.

Peter Carroll *is author of* Puritanism and the Wilderness.

Emma Lee by Juanita Brooks *(Utah State University, Logan, 1975; 113 pp., appen., $4.50).*

REVIEWED BY THAYLE ANDERSON

EMMA BATCHELOR LEE was the seventeenth wife of John Doyle Lee, the Mormon leader in southwestern Utah who was the only participant in the Mountain Meadows Massacre to be executed for his role in it. Juanita Brooks, author of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950) and *John Doyle Lee* (1964), traces Emma's conversion to the Mormon faith in England, her immigration to the United States, and her harrowing trek from Iowa City to Salt Lake City with the Willie and Martin handcart companies that suffered over two hundred casualties during winter storms in Wyoming.

Relying heavily upon John Doyle Lee's diary, Mrs. Brooks then discusses Emma's marriage to Lee (who met her in Salt Lake City shortly after the incident at Mountain Meadows) and her subsequent life in a polygamous marriage, in a harsh physical environment, and in a Mormon society which grew increasingly hostile to the condemned Lee's family. Emma was worthy of being singled out from Lee's nineteen wives for this special attention. Lee himself mentioned her more frequently than the others in his diary, and in incident after incident she proved herself to be a spirited, fiercely devoted wife—a plucky, gritty woman capable of driving off family antagonists with dishpans full of hot water, of bearing a child with only her young son to help her, and of running Lee's ferry across the Colorado River (a physically taxing and hazardous task at a desolate location) virtually single-handedly. And this same dignity of character is evident in Emma's attempts to establish a new life in Arizona after her husband's death.

Although many of the episodes in Mrs. Brook's earlier biography of John Doyle Lee are repeated here, this study is nevertheless an engaging treatment of a stalwart character figuring in a fascinating chapter of Utah history.

Thayle Anderson *teaches at Murray State University and edits* The Kentucky Philological Association Bulletin.

Tideline by Ernest Braun *(The Viking Press, New York, 1975; 144 pp., illus., intro., biblio., notes, $16.50).*

REVIEWED BY DON GREAME KELLEY

A TIDE OF SUNLIGHT pours across the coastal mountain barrier and diffuses the morning fog into a brief golden glow; a rock sends a wave to the sky as a fleeting white cloud; a starfish pries open a mussel; cormorants skim the surf at dusk; kelp and surfgrass, foam bubbles and sunset reflections, briefly pattern wet sand and tide pools—tongue and cold type fail to depict such happenings to the eye and mind removed from the scene.

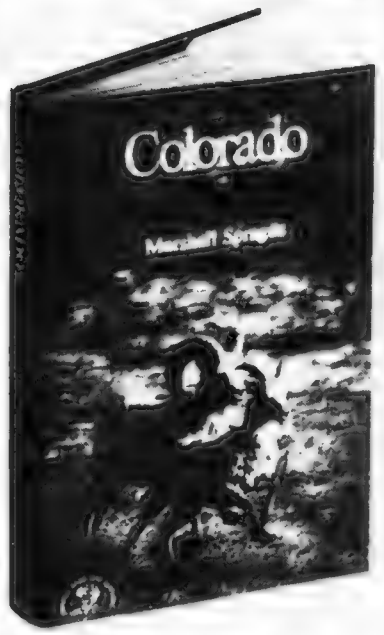
Yet color film, in the hands of a camera master, *can* bring such pictures to screen or print as documented fact, at the very least. There was a time, perhaps, when this kind of mere recording was enough to satisfy—when the natural world was first opening to a widened human ken and appreciation. But by now we have been surfeited with documentation, overwhelmed with a plethora of words and pictures.

Today there is a need for insight as well as knowledge, for transcendence of the commonplace into the supernal light of deeper understanding and greater esthetic appreciation. This need calls for the master behind the lens to be much more than a technician. An uncommon spirit must illumine the image.

Ernest Braun's pictures—nearly a hundred in this book—are subtly, strongly lighted by an informed mind guiding a spirit whose search is for essential truth, found, more often than not, where beauty also is found.

It would be unfair to present *Tideline* as just another, though superior, picture book. Ernest Braun has informed himself, and so his readers in words—words that move with grace as well as truth—of how a wave is born on the far Pacific and travels toward our coast; what waves do with the sand; sand as part of life-support systems; and of life as what all else, in a sense, is all about. *Tideline* is a life line of sorts, to help us get a hold upon the vital meeting place between land and water.

Don Greame Kelley *is a former editor of* Oceans *magazine.*



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Through Camera Eyes by Nelson B. Wadsworth *(Brigham Young University, Provo, 1975; 180 pp., illus., notes, biblio., index, $10.95).*

REVIEWED BY FEROL EGAN

NELSON B. WADSWORTH'S "frozen moments of time" in the life of Mormons and other Utah pioneers is a remarkable contribution to Great Basin history. By searching archives, attics, and even junk piles, he has located priceless daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, glass plates, and early pictures taken with the first dry plates and flexible film. The result is a photographic record of the Mormons from their forced exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the building of their new home in the Great Salt Lake Valley and to the firm establishment of their sanctuary by the turn of the twentieth century.

From the work of two early cameramen—Lucien Foster and Marsena Cannon—there are pictures of such prominent Mormons as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the Utah poetess Eliza Snow. But portraits of notable individuals are but one aspect of the coverage by various photographers which give this book its depth and scope in the field of historical documentation. There are rare pictures of wagon trains (even one of a Mormon emigrant party working its way down through Echo Canyon), a stunning and panoramic view of early Salt Lake City, photographs of workers cutting stone blocks for the Temple, construction scenes of the Tabernacle, shots of Brigham Young's estate, and a great photo of East Temple Street when it was wide and all dirt.

Other views show workmen harvesting salt from evaporation ponds on the Great Salt Lake, pioneers standing in front of log cabins, Ute Indians, stagecoaches loaded with overland passengers, and the driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory.

Through Camera Eyes is a rare book filled with the reality of faded memories. Even more, it is a solid and important contribution to the history of America's westward movement.

Ferol Egan *has just completed a biography of John Charles Frémont.*

Cowboy Life: Reconstructing an American Myth by William W. Savage, Jr. *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1975; 208 pp., intro., illus., $9.95).*

REVIEWED BY RICHARD W. ETULAIN

FEW REVIEWERS will disagree with William W. Savage's contention that "the cowboy is the predominant figure in American mythology." Savage is convinced that the mythic cowboy should not be criticized unduly nor should his mythic dimensions be reduced. Instead, he wants students to understand the historical "basis in reality" of the cowboy image.

The volume under review, which collects thirteen items written primarily between the 1870s and 1900, is intended to depict the realities of cowboy life in the southern Great Plains. Some of the selections are by journalists such as Richard Harding Davis and Alfred Henry Lewis; others are by working cowboys and cattlemen Joseph G. McCoy, Charles Siringo, and Andy Adams. Still others are by travelers and government officials. The writers discuss the social and economic backgrounds of the cowboy, his social customs, his tendencies toward violence, and his often dreary, routine work. Altogether, the selections are well-chosen and pertinent.

One wishes, however, that Savage could have expanded his general introduction and his commentary before each selection; the subject of the book and the excerpts themselves merit additional discussion. Savage deals briefly but illuminatingly with the role of the cowboy in American culture, noting his treatment in fiction, television, and films. Of special note are the more than forty excellent photographs reprinted from the University of Oklahoma's Western History collections. Taken together, the essays and the photographs achieve the editor's main purpose: to give readers a feel for the authentic life of the cowboy in the late nineteenth century. Students and scholars will find Savage's collection well worth a close reading.

Richard W. Etulain *has recently edited a twelve-tape series entitled "The American West: The Frontier Era."*

Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan by Irwin Porges with a foreword by Hulbert Burroughs *(Brigham Young University, Provo, 1975; 819 pp., intro., illus., notes, index, $14.95).*

REVIEWED BY JAMES K. FOLSOM

THE PUBLICATION of this elaborate biography marks the centennial of novelist Edgar Rice Burrough's birth. In his foreword Hulbert Burroughs, Edgar's son, remarks that the book is a "definitive account" of his father, and few readers are likely to quarrel with this statement. For preparation of the book Irwin Porges was given unrestricted access to the records of both the Burroughs company and of individual Burroughs family members. The files were voluminous ("a biographer's dream—or nightmare," says Porges), and with his wife's aid he did a commendable job of reducing their mass to some kind of order. With this volume, the record is virtually complete.

And what a fascinating record it is! Although Burroughs is remembered today primarily as "the man who created Tarzan," he might equally be remembered both as a pioneer of modern science fiction (in fact, he preferred his Martian adventures to his Tarzan stories) and as a writer of unjustly forgotten Westerns. He was a sometime cavalryman, schoolteacher, and businessman before turning, at age thirty-five, to writing. Both as man and author, Burroughs was a paradoxical and complex figure.

Unfortunately, Porges never quite succeeds in disentangling Burroughs the man from the morass of records surrounding him. This biography too often confuses the trivial with the important, emphasizing the minutiae of Burroughs' business life instead of the personal contradictions which make him so fascinating as a biographical subject. There is much food for speculation in this book, but Porges refuses, by and large, to speculate. Hence his "definitive account" is essentially chronicle rather than biography, a creation still awaiting the breath of life.

James K. Folsom *is a professor of English at the University of Colorado.*

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Indian Artifacts of the Northwest Coast by Hilary Stewart *(University of Washington, Seattle, 1976; 172 pp., illus., map, intro., biblio., glossary, index, $14.95 cloth, $6.95 paper).*

The Totem Poles of Skedans by John and Carolyn Smyly *(University of Washington, Seattle, 1976; 119 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., index, $14.95 cloth, $6.95 paper).*

These two carefully written and well-illustrated books on the Northwest Coast Indians should interest both the general reader and the specialist. The first depicts the early stone, bone, antler, and shell artifacts of the Indians; the second describes the totem pole art of the island village of Skedans in British Columbia.

Yesterday's San Diego by Neil Morgan and Tom Blair *(E. A. Seemann, Miami, Florida, 1976; 160 pp., illus., maps, biblio., index, $9.95).*

This pictorial history of San Diego, which begins with Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's discovery of San Diego Harbor in 1542, should interest all who know this beautiful city.

The Annotated McGuffey: Selections from the McGuffey Eclectic Readers, 1836–1920 by Stanley W. Lindberg *(Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, 1976; 358 pp., illus., intro., biblio., index, $12.95).*

"When boys are at play, they must be kind, and not feel cross. If you are cross, good boys will not like you. . . . If you cry, good boys will call you a baby. . . . You must not play with boys that speak bad words or tell lies." With such moralisms, the McGuffey Readers taught more than a billion American children to read. These thoughtfully chosen, well-annotated selections from the Readers, produced in facsimile, provide fascinating insights into one aspect of our American heritage.

Black Powder and Hand Steel: Miners and Machines on the Old Western Frontier by Otis E. Young, Jr. *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1976; 196 pp., illus., map, notes, biblio., index, $9.95).*

A companion volume to the author's *Western Mining* (1970), this book by a mining scholar with a sense of humor is about the men, machinery, and strikes of the great mining era of the West.

Texas Furniture: The Cabinetmakers and Their Work, 1840–1880 by Lonn Taylor and David B. Warren *(University of Texas, Austin, 1975; 387 pp., illus., maps, appen., notes, glossary, biblio., index, $22.50).*

More than two hundred representative examples of mid-nineteenth century Texas cabinetry are described and illustrated in this handsome volume.

The Horizon History of the World in 1776 by Marshall B. Davidson *(American Heritage, New York, 1975; 352 pp., illus., map, index, $27.50).*

While China was the world's richest, most populous nation in 1776, the world this elegant volume presents is largely a European one. Included are chapters on politics, trade, culture, science, and a final one on the inheritance the American revolutionaries took from this world in creating a new government in a new land.

Native Americans: Five Hundred Years After with photographs by Joseph C. Farber and text by Michael Dorris *(Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1975; 333 pp., illus., biblio., index, $14.95).*

Native Americans today are the subject of this large-format book of sensitive and revealing photographs. The short text is by Michael Dorris, a Modoc, who is chairman of the Department of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College.

Charles F. Lummis, The Man and His West by Turbesé Lummis Fiske and Keith Lummis *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1975; 230 pp., illus., biblio., index, $17.50).*

In 1884 a twenty-six-year-old newspaperman named Charles F. Lummis set out to walk from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Los Angeles, California. The West that Lummis discovered on that trip became his lifetime passion and the subject of numerous books by him. In this large-format volume, Lummis's daughter and son describe with sensitivity and honesty the turbulent and fascinating life of this unusual man, whose friends included such aficionados of the West as Adolph Bandelier, Frederic Remington, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Will Rogers.

Spurs Were a-Jinglin': A Brief Look at the Wyoming Range Country by Don Hedgpeth with photographs by Charles J. Belden *(Northland Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1975; 104 pp., illus., intro., biblio., $12.50).*

Charles J. Belden ran a cattle ranch in Wyoming for more than twenty-five years, from 1914 to the early 1940s. Some of the fine photographs Belden made during that time are collected in these pages, accompanied by a text on the history of the range-cattle cowboy.

Edges: Backcountry Lives in America Today on the Borderlands between the Old Ways and the New by Ray Raphael *(Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1976; 225 pp., illus., intro., $7.95).*

This thoughtful book is about the people of the "Edges"—those caught "in the interface between a traditional country way of life and the forces of modernization that threaten to annihilate it." While the specific area is the back country of northern California, the same problems face rural people everywhere in the increasingly urbanized United States.

Freebooters Must Die! by Frederic Rosengarten, Jr. *(Haverford House, Wayne, Pennsylvania, 1976; 226 pp., illus., maps, intro., biblio., index, $12.95).*

In 1855, William Walker, a young American soldier of fortune, marched into Nicaragua with fifty-eight men and made himself president; five years later he was shot by a firing squad in Honduras. This flamboyant adventurer is the subject of Frederic Rosengarten's biography, which is accompanied by a large and interesting selection of illustrations.

Horseback Honeymoon by Dorothy Ballard *(Two Continents Publishing Group, Ltd. and Morgan Press, New York, 1975; 246 pp., illus., index, $8.95).*

In 1907, Ella and Quincy Scott set out on a most unusual honeymoon—a two-thousand-mile horseback ride from St. Paul to Seattle. Dorothy Ballard, their daughter, describes the journey with humor, love, and understanding.

Rancho Cucamonga and Doña Merced by Esther Boulton Black *(San Bernardino County Museum Association, 1975; 344 pp., illus., notes, index, $9.50 cloth, $7.50 paper).*

An exciting, thoroughly documented tale of murder and intrigue is the principal focus of this interesting history of a Southern California rancho and the woman who lost it.

Between Sun and Sod: An Informal History of the Texas Panhandle by Willie Newbury Lewis *(Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1976; 178 pp., illus., intro., appen., biblio., index, $12.50).*

Written by an observant woman who came to the Panhandle as a rancher's bride in 1912, this short history, which focuses on the late nineteenth century, is based largely on firsthand accounts.

The Majestic Rocky Mountains by William S. Ellis with photographs by Dick Durrance II *(National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 1976; 200 pp., illus., map, biblio., index, $4.25).*

Through more than a hundred color photographs and a thoughtful, personal text, this book covers not only the Rocky Mountains themselves but the people who live in them and the towns and cities they have built.

B. Traven: An Introduction by Michael L. Baumann *(University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1976; 184 pp., intro., appen., notes, biblio., index, $9.50).*

A man who called himself B. Traven wrote the western classic, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Yet no one really knows who Traven was. In a fascinating piece of scholarly detective work, Michael L. Baumann analyzes Traven's English and German writings in order to find out more about this mysterious figure.

Desert Documentary: The Spanish Years, 1767–1821 by Kieran McCarty *(Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, 1976; 150 pp., illus., intro., maps, notes, index, $9.50 cloth, $5.00 paper).*

This collection of documents, with explanatory text, covers the Spanish period in Arizona history, beginning with a 1767 report by Juan Bautista de Anza on his service record and ending with little-known documents on Spanish Arizona's role in the struggle for Mexican independence.

Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest by Marta Weigle *(University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1976; 300 pp., illus., appen., notes, biblio., index, $12.95).*

In this well-researched study of the Penitentes, a Hispanic Catholic lay organization, author Marta Weigle explores their history, organization, and activities, as well as their religious and anthropological significance in the culture of New Mexico.

Oklahoma Treasures and Treasure Tales by Steve Wilson *(University of Oklahoma, Norman, 1976; 325 pp., illus., maps, notes, biblio., $15.95).*

Native Americans, Vikings, *conquistadores*, explorers, outlaws, and gold miners all play a part in these treasure stories from Oklahoma gathered from the reminiscences of old-timers as well as written records.

A MATTER OF OPINION

(Continued from page 40)

field has come to take on such an activist character. It is this symbolism that is worthy of our attention on this anniversary occasion.

Over the years, Custer's Last Stand has evoked changing images in the popular mind. For the generation of my youth, in the 1940s and 1950s, it summoned up a kaleidoscope of heroic scenes: grim-faced pioneers in covered wagons trekking westward to carve a civilization out of the wilderness; warriors with feathered bonnets on fleet ponies sweeping down on corralled wagons and circling in attempted massacre; cavalry charging with bugles sounding, banners whipping, and sabers flashing to put the red men to rout and save the day. Such scenes owed a great debt to Cecil B. DeMille and John Ford, to John Wayne and Errol Flynn. The portrayal of Custer by Errol Flynn in *They Died with Their Boots On* sparked my own lifelong fascination with this subject.

These images have now been replaced by darker scenes. The hardy pioneers have become grasping ravagers of the land and oppressors of the natives. The soldiers have become brutes rampaging about the West taking fiendish delight in slaughtering Indian women and children. And the red men

have been ennobled in the mold of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*. Again motion pictures and television have helped create the stereotypes, as *Little Big Man* and *Soldier Blue* amply demonstrate.

These contrasting conceptions, it is interesting to note, are not completely modern phenomena. They have their origins in the nineteenth century when the Indian wars were in full swing. The first comes close to the army's self-image. The troopers saw themselves as the heroic vanguard of civilization, sweeping aside the natives and clearing the way for the settler. The second was the view of the humanitarian groups of the East, those who had warred on slavery and then turned to the cause of Indian reform. These people saw the Indians as innocent children of nature brutalized by the real savages of the plains, the soldiers.

These are stereotypes, stereotypes of such appealing simplicity that they begin to shape beliefs and even actions. The stereotype of the Indian prevalent in my youth encouraged a false and one-dimensional view of the marvelously rich and diverse culture of the American Indian. Today's stereotypes of pioneer and soldier are equally false and simplistic. In addition they are being enlisted in a crusade, a wholly laudable and long-overdue crusade, a crusade aimed at elevating the Indian to the same rights and opportunities that other citizens enjoy.

"Custer died for your sins," bumper stickers proclaim. A massive and not unwarranted guilt complex has settled upon this nation. It can be truly expiated only by making amends to the Indian, by redressing the wrongs. We may well ask, as we pursue this worthy goal, whether its progress depends upon drawing from our past symbols, however seemingly symbolic, that do not truly symbolize; whether in fact a just cause is not demeaned by basing its advocacy in any part upon distortions of historical truth.

The fact is that history, like life, is complex, contradictory, and ambiguous. There are few genuine heroes or villains in real life, merely people who are sometimes heroic, sometimes villainous, but most of the time simply human. Such were both the soldiers and the Indians who fought at the Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876. They belonged to different cultures. They had different attitudes and beliefs. They were of another time. But they were still, for the most part, decent, ordinary human beings. Historical forces over which they had no real control had brought them into conflict. The soldiers were simply carrying out the directives of a government responsive to the will of its citizens and also capable of rationalizing its policies as in the long-range best interests of the victims. The Indians were defending the freedom to follow their own way of life unfettered by a lot of senseless controls imposed by the altogether puzzling aliens who had intruded themselves into a world that had been quite acceptable without them.

In this perspective I would hope that we may look back upon the Little Bighorn in its centennial year. It was a vivid feature of a long and tragic episode in our country's history, one whose consequences to the victims require public recognition and redress. In this sense we judge those who have gone before us and seek to replace the injustice of the past with a justice of the present. But underlying the judgment should be understanding, understanding that the injustice of the past did not necessarily spring from evil motives but rather from a set of values and assumptions that were entirely plausible in their time and place. This understanding permits us to render judgment and act on it without transforming our forebears into caricatures of the real people they were.

A MATTER OF OPINION *is provided as an open forum. Contributions from our readers are invited, but should be limited to 750 words and must be signed.*

THE FIFTY-NINERS

(Continued from page 25)

the spring runoff the mountain streams dwindled and made sluice mining difficult. Primitive living conditions, poor food, and worse whiskey made daily life in the diggings less than attractive to many who were not used to hardships. Then came stories that the fabled Gregory diggings, of which so much had been made, were beginning to play out and that during the summer months the output from this camp was only about a tenth of the June production. Some who had stayed on despite stories of fraud and hoax now reluctantly concluded that it was time to "make tracks for America," as one of the discouraged prospectors put it. Some of his friends, however, decided to spend the winter in Denver to see what another try might bring.

The great rush to the Rockies, as it was later called, came in not one but two big waves in 1859. The earliest commenced even before the grass was green, when the weather on the plains and in the foothills was still subject to spring storms. Therefore, the first of the "go-backers" had started for the States in late April and early May. Many of them were on their way back by May 6, when the Gregory strike was made, and they learned of it long after their arrival home. The second invasion of 1859 took place in June and July, after word of the Gregory find was received and confirmed. At that time the national press began to issue more favorable reports about the mining country, and the "go-backer" retreat momentarily slowed as the counterattack began. However, even the second westward wave met groups of returnees, miners who had taken hope from the most recent favorable reports but who had not been so lucky as Gregory, Jackson, or Russell.

Men of stronger resolution still plodded on toward the mountains, shrugging off the sorrowful tales of those they

met along the way, convinced that if gold was to be found they would have as good a chance as the next man. As one of them put it, an industrious individual who was willing "to put in hard licks" when he reached the diggings could at least make a living as a miner. And some of them did. Others turned to mining-related businesses and stayed on, many of them for the rest of their lives.

Who all these people were and where they came from will never be known precisely, for a good many of them vanished before the census taker made his rounds the next year. However, if the remnants of that great migratory army, the 34,277 who were counted in the 1860 census, were a reasonable cross section of the larger movement, some clues as to their origins are offered. Of the tallied, the greatest number of native-born Americans gave their places of birth as Ohio, New York, Illinois, Missouri, and Indiana, in that order. The largest number of foreign-born were from Canada, followed closely by Ireland and the German states, the total of the nonnatives being 2,666. Census workers learned the occupations of about 27,000 of these newcomers; over 22,000 said they were miners, with laborers, carpenters, and teamsters next in number. Actually the mining country was more heavily populated than these figures would suggest, for at that time what was listed as Colorado was merely the western portion of Kansas. Colorado itself later included land from Nebraska, New Mexico, and Utah, as well as from Kansas. At that time approximately four thousand miners lived in camps north of the fortieth parallel in what was then Nebraska, and thus they were excluded from the count.

While it is possible to learn the birthplaces of those listed in the 1860 census, the document does not reveal their residences immediately prior to joining the ranks of the Fifty-Niners. Certainly many had left their hometowns and filtered westward with the frontier movement. Then because many of them were farmers, they had halted at the edge of the Great American Desert, unwilling to venture farther and risk the vagaries of that hostile climate in their agricultural efforts. It took a gold rush to break the mental dam that held them back. Among those hunting for nuggets in the foothills of the Rockies that first summer were hundreds who had recently lived in Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Taken as a group they were young male Americans of northern European stock, along with some foreigners of much the same lineage. Being young, they had not as yet amassed much money; their main assets were their youth and their optimism. And they had a slogan: "Pikes Peak or Bust!" They believed that this was to be the big adventure of their lives, and for many of them it was. While the mountain named for Lieutenant Pike was not the actual goal of the youthful adventurers, that massive landmark symbolized the general movement. "It stood for the whole country, from Mexico to our northern line," wrote one of these prospectors. "It represented gold, and plenty of it; it spoke of influence, power and position in our middle age, and ease and comfort in our decline. I think that with the first view of the celebrated mountain we felt the first quickening of a definite purpose."

Not all the "Peakers" were young; the gunsmith Sam Hawken boasted that at the age of sixty-seven he had walked a good part of the way west, his gun over his shoulder. But he was an exception. Exceptional, also, were men who possessed any knowledge of mining. Here and there was an experienced hand who had learned his trade much earlier in Georgia or, more recently, in California, but such men were rare among the milling thousands who combed the gulches along the mountain front. Some called themselves miners, for the rudiments of panning could be acquired in a short time, but in the main their newfound knowledge quickly showed its superficiality. Augusta Tabor, the long-suffering first wife of H. A. W. Tabor, looked at them and shook her head in wonderment. "I never saw a country settled up with such greenhorns as Colorado," she remarked. "They were mostly from farms and some clerks. They were all young men from 18 to 30. I was there a good many years before we saw a man with grey hair. They thought they were going to have a second California. . . ."

The Fifty-Niners were not particularly bothered that they were greenhorns in the mining business. They assumed that thousands of amateur gold panners had gone to California and somehow managed to survive; Pikes Peak Country was said to be another California. In any event, many of those who headed west that spring shrugged off their lack of experience and consoled themselves with the thought that anything was better than continued unemployment at home. "We were all alike—nobody had any money—all cleaned out before we skipped out from home," admitted one of them. "No one had done anything to be ashamed of; but it was a regular amalgamation of busted people, who left their country for their country's good, and their own." What he said undoubtedly was true in his case and in that of many others, but it was not true that they were all alike financially. It took money to make the move to Pikes Peak and more money to get a start there. Considerable amounts of capital were expended in the rush, and its participants were by no means invariably "busted."

Mining rushes have traditionally attracted all types, good and bad; Colorado was no exception. Eastern newspapermen and other observers who watched the stampede to the foothills of the Rockies explained that the "border countries," or the frontier, always tended to attract the migratory and, among them, the lawless. This gold rush appeared to have drawn men from widely separated walks of life; on the streets of Denver, well-dressed business and professional types mingled with some extremely disreputable-looking persons. But in the pressure of the day's demands, none of the Fifty-Niners gave much thought to origins and background. It was the future that counted.

Robert G. Athearn *is a professor of western history at the University of Colorado and the author of* High Country Empire *and many other books on the West.*

MARTHA MAXWELL

(Continued from page 34)

unfinished portion of their house. Quickly Martha grabbed her stepfather's gun, steadied it on some rails, and shot the snake. Her stepfather was so impressed with her bravery that he taught her how to use the gun.

In the early 1850s, Martha attended Oberlin College and then Lawrence College, which was closer to home. Her roommate's father, a widower named James Maxwell, fell in love with the studious young woman, and when Martha finished college, they married. In 1860 the Maxwells moved to Colorado so that James Maxwell could be nearer his sawmill interests along the Union Pacific Railroad. For Martha Maxwell the move meant leaving a comfortable home for the hard life of a pioneer woman—living first in a tent and then in a log house with a dirt floor. But life on the frontier developed her talent as a naturalist; dwelling as she did among the creatures of the forest, she began to observe them with a scientific curiosity.

But it was only when a German taxidermist appeared as a squatter on some Maxwell property that Martha Maxwell discovered her vocation. Immediately intrigued, she offered the man a handsome sum to teach her how to preserve the animals she watched with such devotion. At first, the taxidermist agreed but later grew wary and changed his mind. He was frankly fearful that because she was a woman and undoubtedly skilled in needlework, she would quickly become a good taxidermist and too formidable a competitor.

A few weeks later when a court officially ordered the man off the land, Martha Maxwell felt justified in raiding his cabin and carrying his possessions to a spot outside the property. As she gathered up his effects, which included birds in the early stages of preparation, she found herself eagerly examining every object for clues about techniques and materials. Each item she touched increased her fascination with the art.

Shortly after her encounter with the taxidermist, Martha Maxwell was called back to Wisconsin where her mother was seriously ill. During her stay there she became further involved with taxidermy as she helped a professor create a natural history display case for her sisters' school.

Meanwhile, her husband was struggling with financial difficulties, and in the spring of 1868 when she rejoined him, they moved to Boulder, then a town of just 300 people. It was during this first summer in Boulder that Martha Maxwell began her collection of animals and birds of the region.

Some choice specimens were obtained by her husband or by neighborhood boys, but Martha Maxwell soon arranged to accompany her husband on his business trips to remote areas of the Rockies so that she could collect the specimens herself. Often joined by their young daughter, the Maxwells traveled by covered wagon or pack horse and camped out at night, wrapped in buffalo robes.

The Maxwells' trips into the wilderness were sometimes uncomfortable and even dangerous. During one expedition, a sudden thunderstorm endangered their lives. The mountain trail they were following wound along the bank of a swollen river. The frightened horses could scarcely see the narrow, slippery path in the driving rain. Suddenly the daughter's horse mistook the trail. Only in the nick of time did Martha Maxwell's alert warning cry stop the horse and prevent her daughter's death in the raging water.

During these trips, Martha Maxwell spent long hours observing animals and birds in their natural habitat, for she was determined to make her animal specimens as lifelike as possible. Home again in Boulder, she developed the technique of molding the frames of her skinned animals onto plaster in the natural positions she had observed and then carefully covering these sculptures with the preserved skins.

Soon word of her collection spread through the area, and in the summer of 1870, she received an offer from Shaw's Botanical Gardens in Saint Louis to purchase what was now an impressive natural history collection. Family finances were such that she could hardly refuse, although it was with reluctance that she parted with her treasures.

The sale enabled the Maxwells to buy a new home in Boulder Creek, a delightful retreat for a naturalist. Then while her husband planted and tended hundreds of fruit trees, Martha Maxwell began to rebuild her collection.

Old friends, local boys, miners, and farmers all helped by bringing in new specimens. Soon the Maxwell home looked like a kind of natural history museum. A small building a short distance from the house served as a workroom. There tools of the trade mingled with glass eyes, fossils, minerals, and the bones of animals. "To this castle of miscellanies all candidates for taxidermic immortality were brought, and before a year had passed its walls were picturesque with rows of various kinds of owls, looking down in unblinking solemnity on multitudinous perches filled with all manner of feathered neighbors, while the center of the room was occupied with incomplete groups of beasts of all kinds and sizes, from a grizzly bear to a jumping mouse."

There were many live animals about the place as well. A porcupine named Yocko snuggled on any hospitable lap, while a fawn named Dick wandered freely about the yard.

By the spring of 1873, Martha Maxwell had replaced most of the specimens sold to Shaw's Gardens and had added many new ones as well. Friends now urged her to create a real museum, and she began to work enthusiastically at this project. To broaden the scope of her collection, she exchanged specimens with collectors in both the East and the West. Finally during a six-month trip to California, she gathered many additional objects.

Soon after returning home, the citizens of Boulder offered her the use of a hall for her museum. The *Boulder News*

reported the formal opening: "The event of the week was the opening of the Rocky Mountain Museum—an event celebrated with flags and music, as befitted an occasion so significant of benefit to the country. The Boulder brass band and the string band were out . . . It is well called the 'Rocky Mountain Museum,' as [Martha Maxwell] and her assistant, Professor Glass, have laid the whole Rocky Mountain region under tribute for representatives of its fauna, fossils, and minerals. . . . Every beast of the forest and plains, from the big buffalo and huge cinnamon, to the field mouse and the mole; every bird of the air; rare fish and shells from the seas."

A tourist visiting the new museum recorded his impressions of its contents:

"The distinctive feature of the museum . . . is a dramatic group of animals placed at the further end of the room. Here are arranged mounds of earth, rocks, and pine trees, in a by no means bad imitation of a wild, rocky landscape. And among these rocks and trees are grouped the stuffed animals . . . and every one in a most lifelike and significant attitude. A doe is licking two exquisite little fawns, while the stag looks on with a proud expression. A bear is crawling out of the mouth of a cave. A fox is slyly prowling along, ready to spring on a rabbit . . . a mother grouse is clucking about a brood of chickens in the most inimitably natural way."

DURING 1875 Martha Maxwell was persuaded to move her museum to Denver, where it would be accessible to more people. During her first winter there, she mounted an elk and other large animals obtained during a difficult and dangerous excursion into the wilderness. Meanwhile, the legislature of Colorado had decided that the territory should take part in the upcoming Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, and Martha Maxwell was asked to display her collection as part of the Colorado exhibit.

The Exhibition had already opened when Martha Maxwell arrived in Philadelphia, and so she was hampered in setting up her display by the endless questions of fascinated fair visitors as well as by the ineptness of her assigned helper, who was all thumbs. But at last, to the wonder and delight of all, her corner of the Kansas and Colorado Building began to take on the appearance of a miniature western wilderness.

Martha Maxwell's exhibit was so enthusiastically received by the public that it was shown in Washington, D.C., in the winter of 1876–77, after the Centennial Exhibition had closed. There she was acknowledged as the discoverer of the Rocky Mountain screech owl, and a naturalist at the Smithsonian Institution honored her by naming this new variety of owl the "Scops Maxwellae."

Martha Maxwell died in 1881, just five years after her triumph at the Centennial Exhibition. Historians have unfortunately forgotten this plucky frontier woman whose dedication as a naturalist, skill in taxidermy, and sense of drama and artistry gave her unusual distinction among American women of her day. At one time she had a collection of 47 species of mammals and 224 birds, most of which she had obtained herself. She was said to have been the only known woman naturalist of her period as well as the first taxidermist to place animals and birds in natural attitudes and settings—anticipating later diorama museum displays.

When asked why she shot so many creatures, Martha Maxwell, a strict vegetarian, replied: "There isn't a day you don't tacitly consent to have some creature killed that you may eat it. . . . I leave it to you. Which is the more cruel? To kill to eat or to kill to immortalize?"

MARTHA MAXWELL AND HER ANIMALS POSE AT THE 1876 EXHIBITION IN PHILADELPHIA

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Photographic and text research for the authors' recently published book *America's Centennial Celebration, Philadelphia, 1876*, inspired the article about Martha Maxwell.

A book written by Mrs. Maxwell's sister, Mary Dartt, *On the Plains and Among the Peaks; or, How Mrs. Maxwell made her Natural History Collection* (Philadelphia, 1879), gives biographical and narrative information on this personality. Frank Fossett's *Colorado: Its Gold and Silver Mines, Farms and Stock Ranges, and Health and Pleasure Resorts* (New York, 1879) provides a background of Colorado during the period. Detailed accounts of the Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, are found in Samuel J. Burr's *Memorial of the International Exhibition* (Hartford, 1877) and James D. McCabe's *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia, 1876).

Floyd and Marion Rinhart *are consultants on American pioneer photography at Ohio State University, Department of Photography and Cinema. They have written several books relating to American pioneer photography and nineteenth-century social history.*

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